

Next Week: "Ned Hazel, the Boy Trapper." Best Boys' Story Ever Written.

New York Sunday Journal

A HOME WEEKLY FOR WINTER NIGHTS AND SUMMER DAYS.

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WHEN I AM DEAD.

BY ERNEST K. REXFORD.

Sometimes when I have grown weary
Of the world, and the ways of men,
And the days seem long and dreary
Ere nightfall comes again,
A thought has come stealing softly
Into my soul, and said:
"You will not be tired and weary
When you are dead."
And when I am sick with the discord
That jars in the chords of life,
And the wearisome woe and folly
Linked with the sin and strife;
Then this thought comes whispering to me,
The words it has often said,
"The world will all be forgotten
When you are dead."
So whenever I yearn for quiet
In the hurrying march of life,
Comes this vague, sweet thought of resting
Some day from the wearisome strife;
And with this thought in my bosom
My soul is quieted,
For I know that rest shall come to me
When I am dead!

The Prairie Rover:

OR,
THE ROBIN HOOD OF THE BORDER.

BY BUFFALO BILL,

AUTHOR OF "DEADLY-EYE, THE UNKNOWN
SCOUT," ETC.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRAIRIE ROVER'S BRAVE DEED.

NIGHT upon the boundless prairie! its silence and solitude alone broken by a horse and rider, slowly wending their way over the unbroken plain.

Darkness upon all around, but a darkness slowly becoming of a grayish hue before the near approach of dawn, which already brightens up the eastern skies.

Alone in the vast solitude and silence, alone with nature and nature's God, the horseman, as if impressed with the scene and its calm influence, slowly rides along, his gaze fixed upon the eastern skies, growing brighter and brighter as the moments pass on.

As the rosy tint of morn brightened up the expansive plains, the face and form of horse and rider became visible; a large black mustang of great beauty, and with every indication of wonderful speed and endurance, while his rider stood fully six feet in height, was of a yielding, graceful form, denoting strength and activity, and a handsome, daring face that would win confidence, and was indicative of a determined will, a bold spirit and a generous heart.

Scarcely more than thirty years of age in appearance, there were yet lines about the firm mouth and around the corners of the eyes, with here and there silver threads in his dark hair, which proved that he was either older than he appeared, or had seen much sorrow and trouble.

He was attired in a full suit of dressed buckskin, ornamented with bead and quill work, and wore a belt containing three silver-mounted revolvers, and a long, keen knife, in a leather sheath.

At his back was slung a short seven-shooting rifle of late invention, and at his saddle-bow hung a keen little ax and a horse-hair lariet. Upon his head he wore a broad sombrero, encircled by a cord of gold, and his feet were incased in cavalry boots, the heels being armed with massive gold spurs.

He was one of those wandering men of the Western plains, half hunter, half guide, a scout, trapper, or Indian-fighter, according to circumstances; but one whose early life had been passed amid far different scenes, for his face was refined and bore the stamp of intellect, though somewhat marred by the stern look resting upon the mouth, and which his brown mustache failed to hide, while his hair, worn long and flowing, gave him, at first glance, an effeminate look.

As the daylight grew stronger, the horseman suddenly sprang to the ground, and a word to his faithful steed caused him to sink quickly and quietly down in the tall prairie grass.

A glance across the prairie had occasioned this sudden move on the part of the horseman, and a closer glance discerned, some four miles distant, a small cavalcade of half a dozen horsemen, approaching at a sweeping gallop.

Constant solitude causes the Western hunter soon to learn to speak aloud when alone, as if addressing his thoughts to himself, or his steed, and thus it was with the horseman, who, after a closer inspection of the approaching cavalcade, said aloud:

"It is most too far to tell their color, but I do not think they are Indians."

Then, as the eastern skies grew more rosy before the upward march of the sun, he cried:

"By Heaven! they are Indians, and in full pursuit of a fugitive—and the pursued is a woman!"

"Be on the alert, old Comrade, for the enemy is at hand," and the scout affectionately patted the neck of his faithful steed, who, in turn, rubbed his nose against his master's shoulder.

Rapidly on came the pursued and pursuing,



A word to his faithful steed caused him to sink quickly and quietly down in the tall prairie grass.

hardly a hundred yards dividing them, and the Indians riding close together, as though their horses were of average speed.

Glancing attentively at the horse in flight, the scout observed that it was a light-limbed gray, evidently unused to prairie life, for steadily the mustangs of the Indians were gaining upon him.

The rider of the gray was indeed a woman, or rather a young girl, scarcely more than seventeen, and even at that distance the scout beheld that she had a yielding, graceful form, and a mass of golden hair flying loose in the wind.

"She has been taken from the settlements by those red devils, and in some way has managed to elude their watchfulness and to escape. Now, Comrade, it is time for us to act, for in a few moments more they will be upon us. Up, old fellow!"

With a bound Comrade was upon his feet, and nimbly springing into his saddle, the scout gave a wild and prolonged whoop and dashed forth to meet the flying girl.

The effect of his sudden appearance was magical upon both the maiden and the Indians, for the former, at once recognizing him as a pale-face, urged her horse forward with redoubled earnestness, while consternation seemed to seize upon the red-skins, who immediately drew rein, as if to hold a council of war.

The next instant the maiden dashed up to the side of the scout, her face flushed, hair disheveled and tears glittering in her beautiful eyes—tears of joy at her escape, for, after one glance into the daring, handsome face of the man before her, she felt no fear.

"Do not hesitate here, Miss, but ride on out of range, while I have a little skirmish with those fellows," quietly said the scout, gazing with admiration upon the young girl.

"But you will be in danger, sir," she softly returned.

"My life is always in danger, Miss; but ride on, please, for here come the devils."

Quickly obeying, the maiden once more urged her horse forward, and halting at the distance of a few hundred yards, beheld the scout dashing swiftly on to meet the Indian warriors, who, five in number, seemed surprised at the daring of the single horseman.

But he gave them no time for surprise, for, unslinging his rifle, he suddenly drew Comrade back upon his haunches, and once, twice, thrice, rung forth the shots, and two red-skins and one mustang were the victims.

In dismay, the three remaining warriors turned to fly, the dismounted one endeavoring to catch one of the ponies of his dead companions, but like the wind the scout bore down upon him, and he was compelled to come to bay, at the same time uttering a cry for aid to the two flying braves, and venting his war-whoop of defiance against his pale-face foe.

Quickly the rifle of the warrior went to his shoulder, a report followed, and throwing up his arms, the scout reeled in his saddle, swayed violently from side to side, and then fell to the ground, while the trusty Comrade circled around him in a gallop, neighing loudly as if in distress.

Instantly, yell after yell of triumph broke from the Indian warrior, as he dashed forward

to scalp his foe, while his yells were echoed from his two companions, who wheeled to the right about as soon as they saw their enemy fall, and came back with their ponies at their speed. With a groan of despair the maiden wheeled her tired gray, and once more sped away in wild flight, almost every hope of escape having left her.

But, suddenly, she heard a shot behind her, followed by another and another in quick succession, and wondering, she looked back to find the scout upon his feet, and only one Indian warrior visible, and he clinging closely to his swiftly-flying pony.

Then she saw the scout bound upon the back of Comrade, and away dashed the black mustang in pursuit, his mighty bounds quickly overhauling his smaller rival.

A few moments more and there was a circle around the scout's head, a dark mass was launched quickly forward, and the steed of the Indian tumbled violently to the ground, crushing his rider beneath him, while over the still prairie went forth the triumphant war-cry of the pale-face.

"Noble old Comrade! We got away with the whole of them, did we not?"

"Five scalps in half an hour!" and so saying, the scout dismounted, bent over, and the bleeding scalp-lock was soon at his belt.

From one to the other of the fallen braves he went, and just as he had attached his last war-trophy to his string, where already hung two score and more mementoes of desperate encounters, the maiden dashed up, her face radiant with joy at her escape.

"You thought I had gone under, Miss, and so decamped," said the scout, politely raising his broad sombrero.

"Yes, sir; but are you not hurt?"

"Not in the least; it was an old trick of mine to catch that fellow's companions, who were flying like mad across the prairie."

"Now I am at your service to escort you back to the settlements, for doubtless you live there."

"Yes, sir; I am Nina Vernon, the daughter of the commander of the fort."

"Indeed! It gives me pleasure to have served Colonel Vernon, through his most beautiful daughter; and the scout again bent an admiring look upon the lovely young face, until the eyes of Nina Vernon lowered before his own, for she read there, girl though she was, the power her beauty had over the dashing, handsome man.

After a short rest and an humble meal, from the scout's haversack, the two set forth for the fort, distant some forty miles, and the maiden told her brave preserver that she lived in the settlement with her aunt, a sister of her father, and that it was while on her way to the fort to visit her parent, that she had suddenly been met by the Sioux warriors, who had made her prisoner and hurried her away.

At night they had camped, and the next morning, just before day, when they were preparing to start, she had suddenly bounded away from them, with the determination to escape, believing her gray horse could easily distance their Indian ponies.

For a while the gray had kept well ahead of their ponies, but unaccustomed to a long run, they soon began to overhail him, and her re-

capture would have been certain, had she not unexpectedly met the scout.

"It was bold of the red-skins to venture thus near the fort; but I think I understand their motive."

"And can I ask what it was?"

"Certainly; they knew you to be the daughter of the chief military commander on the border, and imagined they could bring your father to agree to their terms, ere they surrendered you."

"They would not have harmed me, then?"

"Colonel Vernon refused their request."

"Then to you I owe my life, for I know my father too well to feel that he would allow even his love for me to interfere with his duty; but I am a soldier's daughter, and would have died without fear, though it is a horrible thought to have to die so young, is it not, sir?"

"For years, Miss Vernon, I have been, I may say, hand in hand with death, so I have not the dread of it most persons feel. But what a joy it will be to your father and aunt to meet you once more."

"Indeed it will, for they love me dearly."

"I do not wonder at it, for I—but, yonder come a party of horsemen, and until we know whether they are friends or foes, it behooves us to be cautious; and drawing rein, the scout narrowly scanned a small cavalcade visible across the prairie, some six miles distant.

After a close inspection, the scout continued, slowly:

"They are some forty in number, and—hal! they are soldiers, for the sun glitters upon their arms."

"Yes, I see them now myself, and—"

"And what, Miss Vernon?" quietly asked the scout.

"And I will doubtless have to trouble you no longer, for they are doubtless my father's troopers."

"Would that I had never other trouble than you can give," said the scout, somewhat sadly; and then he continued: "Yes, they are a cavalry squadron, and they are following on the Indian trail; now they see us; and, listen, you can hear the troopers cheer, even at this distance."

Rapidly riding forward, the scout and Nina Vernon soon drew near to the soldiers, who cheered lustily as they beheld the maiden, no longer in the power of the red-men.

At the head of the squadron rode a man of perhaps fifty years of age, but most youthful in movement and appearance.

With a glad smile upon his soldierly face, Colonel Vernon pressed forward, and the next moment, affectionately saluted his daughter, who, after bowing kindly to two young officers at the head of the troop, and waving her hand to the soldiers, said, quickly:

"Father, this is the gentleman who has saved my life; but I do not know his name."

The colonel turned toward the scout, who quietly sat his horse, and said:

"My friend, I owe you a debt I can never repay, except by a lasting friendship; but you are a stranger to me, for I cannot recall your face."

"Yet we have met before, Colonel Vernon, but it matters not where or when; now our

paths lie in different directions, for I was on my way further into the Indian country, when I met Miss Vernon."

The colonel gazed at the man before him with surprise, for he saw in his face, bearing, and conversation that he was no ordinary person, and his reply that he was going still further into a hostile country, and alone, caused him to feel some suspicion regarding him; so he replied:

"You certainly cannot intend pressing still further into the savage country, for it is even unsafe for as small a body of troopers as I have with me to penetrate this far from the fort, with the hostile tribes now going upon the war-path all around us."

The scout smiled slightly, and answered:

"Those enemies which I cannot defeat, Colonel Vernon, Comrade can show a clean pair of heels to. I know this border, sir, from the Black Hills down to the Rio Grande, and it is to discover the intention of the red-skins that I now enter their country."

"Are you a settler on the frontier, can I ask?"

"No, sir; I am a free rover of the prairies, with no country, no people, no home other than the forests and the plains."

"Pardon me, are you not he that is called the Prairie Rover?" and one of the two young officers rode forward, a handsome, dashing young captain, who had turned the heads of half the border belles, and was in turn desperately in love with Nina Vernon.

"I am he that is called the Prairie Rover, Captain Raymond," quietly returned the scout, and every eye was upon him, for, from the Missouri river to the Rocky Mountains the name had become known, though who the scout in reality was, whence he came, or his name, none could tell.

But certain it was, far and wide he was known as a deadly foe to the Indians, and strange stories were told of how he lived alone in some distant glen, and that his wigwam was fringed with the scalps of his red enemies, who dreaded the very mention of his name.

"You are then the Prairie Rover?" absently said Colonel Vernon, looking fixedly into the splendid face before him, while Nina, with renewed intent, also gazed upon him.

Without replying directly to the question, the scout returned:

"The Indians who stole your daughter, Colonel Vernon, were picked warriors, under the renowned chief, Bad Wolf."

"Say you so? I would give much to take that red devil, for he has caused the whole frontier a world of trouble."

"Here hangs his scalp, colonel, with those of the four other braves who kidnapped Miss Vernon," modestly said the scout.

"What! single-handed you attacked five warriors, one of whom was Bad Wolf, and defeated them? You are a marvelous man, scout."

"Thank you, sir. Now let me urge that you return to the fort, for hostile bands of red-skins are about, and you do not wish an engagement in your present company," and the scout glanced in the direction of Nina, and catching his meaning, the colonel replied:

"I will follow your advice. Again let me thank you for the service rendered me, and believe me the fort shall ever be a home to you. Good-by."

Holding out his hand as he spoke, the scout grasped it warmly, and said:

"The result of my discoveries you shall know, colonel; but my word for it, the settlers should be thoroughly on their guard, for a storm-cloud of war is soon to break along the border, the more terrible in its force because renegades will be the leaders of the red-skins."

"Ha! say you so? I had heard this hinted before."

"It is true, colonel; but between the frontier and danger there will be one protecting arm you little dream of. Gentlemen, good-morning. Miss Vernon, when next we meet, I trust you will have recovered from the fatigues of your rough ride."

Without another word the scout raised his sombrero, bent low in his saddle, and with a word to Comrade, sped like a bird over the prairie, his course watched with interest by those whom he had left behind.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WAR-CLOUD.

THE fort, under the command of Colonel Vernon, was one of the most important outposts on the border, situated upon the northern bank of the upper waters of the Arkansas.

The country around was most fertile, and adapted to cultivation and stock-raising. For miles around the military post were scattered the humble homes of the bold pioneer settlers, many of whom were from the higher walks of life, and whose loss of fortune had driven to seek the Far West.

As Colonel Vernon had been for long years the commander of an outpost, he had established for himself a cabin home, and surrounded it with many comforts if not luxuries, and here he was wont to pass his leisure hours, when military duty did not keep him at the fort, or fighting Indians.

His sister, a maiden lady of about thirty-five, was his housekeeper, and acted as a mother to his Nina, for the colonel had lost

his wife years before; and it was a comfortable, cheerful western home, and both the aunt and niece seemed perfectly happy, especially the latter, for she was a reigning belle upon the plains, and every young officer at the fort, and handsome scout and hunter that trod the prairies, loved her dearly, as young as she was, and longed to have her cheer their homes with her bright presence.

But Nina was considerable of a coquette, and even the handsome and dashing Captain Ramsey Raymond could not settle in his own mind whether the little beauty really cared for him, or was playing with his affection.

Returning in safety to her home after her capture by the red-skins, Nina was welcomed with shouts of joy by all, and it was gratifying for her to see that all the young settlers and hunters were forming a band to start to her rescue, and the look of disappointment when they saw her return in safety without their aid, Nina plainly detected.

Determined to be more guarded in the future, and alarmed by the words of the Prairie Rover, Colonel Vernon at once called a council of the settlers, and all arrangements were entered upon for strongly guarding the settlement from a surprise and an attack, and scouts were sent out on duty for miles around.

Slowly passed the days away until they numbered ten, since Nina's rescue, and yet no sign of hostile Indians was visible, and the settlers began to hope that the war-cloud had blown over, when suddenly through the settlement dashed a horseman, his steed fairly flying over the ground as he sped on toward the fort.

Silently and erect he sat in his saddle, uttering no word of warning, but pressing on; and from lip to lip went the words:

"That man is the Prairie Rover."

Skimming along swiftly, the black mustang soon drew rein at the portal of the fort, and dashed within, when he was brought to a halt, and his master said:

"I would see Colonel Vernon."

"Enter the cabin to the right, sir," politely said the guard. And the knock upon the door was answered by a stern:

"Come in."

"Ha! my worthy friend, it is you! Welcome back," and the colonel warmly welcomed the scout, whose eyes sought another portion of the room, where sat Nina, arranging some wild flowers in a vase.

"Thank you, sir; I have come as a bearer of important tidings—Miss Vernon, good-evening," and the scout grasped the hand which Nina warmly extended toward him, while a sweet smile of welcome was upon her face.

"Say, you so, scout! a move of the tribes against us?"

Prairie Rover glanced toward Nina, and reading his look, Colonel Vernon said:

"Never mind Nina; she is a soldier's daughter, and must listen unmoved to tales of war."

"Well, sir, I will make my report at once, for it is necessary to be on the alert. I penetrated, after parting with you, as far as the hills without particular adventure, and meeting with a friendly Indian, he led me, in disguise, into the big village of the Sioux, where a council of chiefs belonging to the hostile tribes was being held."

"Believing me to be a renegade white, a sub-chief of one of the lower southern tribes, I was invited to the council lodge, and hence had every opportunity to discover the plans of the Indians."

"It was a most daring undertaking, scout, and one I am rejoiced to see you well out of; but, go on; you interest me greatly, and I declare, Nina is really pale at the thought of the danger you run."

The scout's dark face flushed slightly, and he continued:

"In that council lodge were the most famous warriors of the hostile tribes, and one man, a pale-face, who is the instigator and leader of the whole move."

"Indeed! and he is—"

"The man who has won the title of the Prairie Robin Hood."

"Ha! I half suspected your answer. Scout, I would give my commission to take that man alive," cried Colonel Vernon, earnestly.

"And I would give my life if I could take him," sternly replied the scout, and in a tone so bitter and deep that both Nina and her father started, for they felt that it was no ordinary hatred that caused Prairie Rover to speak thus.

After an instant's hesitation the scout resumed:

"It was not the first time that the Prairie Robin Hood and myself had met, and it will not be the last!"

"With my hands tied, as it were, I was compelled to sit and listen to that man's diabolical harangues to the Indians, and hear him plot and plan to lay the settlements in ashes, for he seemed to be a perfect fiend in his hatred of his own race."

"Narrowly he watched and questioned me regarding the lower tribes, and though I could see his suspicions were aroused, he had to be satisfied, as the Indian chief who had presented me at the council was high in authority, and would not have his friend insulted."

"Strange that an Indian, knowing your true character, should have betrayed his countrymen."

"Not so, sir, when I tell you that my friend is a Comanche brave, one whose life I saved, and who followed me from the burning prairie of the far south-west, and treated with kindness by the Sioux, he warned them of the coming attack of a hostile tribe, and for it was made a chief. He is friendly to me, and hence to the pale-faces, against whom he will raise no hand in anger."

"But, to continue: the chiefs, headed by Robin Hood, the renegade, agreed to raise the tomahawk along the whole border, pressing forward in large force toward the upper settlements, and coming southward, continue their work of ruin and bloodshed. This was the plan of the white chief, who is to assemble his renegade band at the head of the Indians, and thus encourage them in their work of devilry."

"The white hound! Oh! if I can ever get him in my power! But when is this move to be made, scout?"

"Within the week, Colonel Vernon, and I would advise that you at once throw your heaviest force toward the upper settlements, warn the whole line, draw in all of your detached posts, and then, if you will trust me with a command, I will make a move against the Indian villages in the hills that will soon bring the red devils back to protect their homes."

"You plan like a soldier, scout, and as numerous as are our enemies, thus warned as we will be along the whole line, they will find us more than a match, even headed as they will be by that desperado, Robin Hood, and his band of renegades; but how many men will you require?"

"I should like at least fifty troopers, and as many more of hunters, trappers, scouts, and

friendly Indians, whom I can collect in the settlement in half a day."

"This will give you a hundred men—a small force to penetrate thus far into the Indian country."

"We will make them think we are a thousand before we are done with them," said the scout, in a voice that caused both Nina and her father to laugh.

"You shall have the men, and pick them yourself."

"Thanks, colonel; then I will select first, Captain Ramsey Raymond," and the scout gazed furtively toward Nina to watch the effect of his words; but that coy maiden did not even show signs of having heard the name of the dashing young officer.

"You could not have a better man; hey, Nina?"

"Captain Raymond is a gallant officer, I think I have heard it said," demurely replied Nina.

"And an ardent lover, too, girl, is he not?" slyly asked the colonel, with a wink at the scout.

"You should ask him, father, for I am no judge. Shall I call the orderly?"

"Yes—oh! here is Raymond now," and at that instant the young captain entered, his face beaming with pleasure when he beheld Nina.

In a few moments Colonel Vernon had made known to him all that the scout had said, and with delight the young officer learned that he was selected for the daring, nay, desperate duty of penetrating the Indian country to draw off the attacking forces from the settlements by a war in their own camp.

"It is a mission I accept with thanks for the honor bestowed in selecting me, Sir Scout."

"I felt that you would be most willing. Now, captain, I leave to you the selection of your men and horses, for the former must be the bravest of the brave, and the latter swift and with powers of great endurance, and as to my portion of the command, I will select only those men whom I know have been tried and are willing to die, if need be."

"Remember, the undertaking is one of terrible danger and hardship, for we will have to penetrate the Indian country, many long miles from any support, and our attacks will be made against Indian villages not wholly unprotected, and when we have succeeded in drawing the red-skins back to defend their homes, we will have to cut our way back through ten times our number."

"I understand the risks, and accept them with pleasure. When shall we start?" quickly replied Ramsey Raymond.

"To-night I will start, and the fourth night from this I will meet you and the command at the old ruined outpost just at the edge of the hill country. You remember it, as it was there you fought Bad Wolf and his warriors, some two years ago."

"I remember it well, and will meet you there the fourth night from this. Shall I follow the southern trail to get there, as the Indians will doubtless be scouting on the northern one?"

"Yes, and travel only by night—from dark to daybreak, making your trips so as to get a motive to conceal you by day. If you see an Indian, let not one escape you to give warning, and in an important mission of this kind let me urge that the red-skins are treacherous, slippery scamps, and you had better take no prisoners, as dead men tell no tales."

The scout spoke sternly, and his three hearers felt that he was in deadly earnest.

"I understand; but can I ask why you go on ahead?"

"I desire to see the Robin Hood and his men start on their hellish expedition, count their numbers, and dispatch at once word to Colonel Vernon, the number of the enemy and the direction they take."

"Whom will you send, scout?" asked Colonel Vernon, with surprise.

"One who has never deceived me, one who has been my best friend and almost constant companion for years."

"When this ring is handed to you, you will know my messenger," and the scout held up to view a gold ring, fashioned after a snake, with ruby eyes.

Within the ring was engraven a French motto, which, translated, read:

"The day will come."

"Now I must go through the settlement, and look up my men; and, Colonel Vernon, as my horse needs rest, can I claim an animal from you for my ride?"

"My stables are at your service, scout," replied Colonel Vernon, and a short while after Prairie Rover departed in search of his band for the dangerous expedition he had so daringly determined upon.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CABIN HOME IN THE HILLS.

NIGHT had settled rudely down upon the earth, for the heavens were black with storm-clouds, and the winds howled mournfully through the forests, driving great drops of rain into the face of a horseman as his noble steed struggled bravely forward, ascending slowly but surely a steep hill, heavily timbered by giant trees.

"On, on, my good fellow," said the rider, and his voice was that of the Prairie Rover, while Comrade, cheered by the voice of his master, pressed on with renewed vigor.

A short mile further, old Comrade, and we will be safe from the storm, and a dry shelter and good feed await you," and still further encouraged, the good steed struggled against the storm.

A few moments more, and beneath an overhanging cliff the scout suddenly turned into a narrow canyon, or gorge, down which a torrent of water rushed, nearly knee deep.

Though the night was fearfully dark, Comrade seemed to fully understand his course, and after a tramp of a quarter of a mile, entered the yawning mouth of a large cavern, in the face of the cliff on the right.

Here the scout dismounted, and leading Comrade with one hand, while with the other he felt the side of the cavern wall, he walked slowly forward until he came out into an open space surrounded upon all sides by steep treacherous hills, impossible of ascent.

A shrill whistle, and a light suddenly glimmered before him, at the distance of fifty yards, and the form of a man was visible in the open doorway of a small but strongly-built cabin.

"Come, Wild Wolf, down with the bridge!" cried the scout, in a loud voice, and in a short while the person addressed advanced toward Prairie Rover, bearing upon his shoulders a heavy log, which he soon stood on one end and let fall across a deep chasm, some fifteen feet wide, that yawned between the cabin and the cave through the hill.

Two other similar pieces were then brought and placed in position, and a flooring of roughly-hewn boards laid across, so that a frail bridge was manufactured across the

chasm, and upon which both the scout and Comrade crossed to the other side without a tremor of fear, although a misstep, or the breaking of the frail support, would have hurled them hundreds of feet below.

Leading his horse into one end of the cabin, the scout soon rubbed him dry, and gave him a good feed of dried grass, after which he entered the other apartment of the cabin, where his companion was busily engaged in preparing a substantial and tempting repast of buffalo-meat, jerked, corn-cakes and strong coffee.

"Well, Wild Wolf, what news have you?" said the scout, taking his wet blanket from around him, and seating himself near the blazing fire, while he addressed the Indian in the Comanche tongue.

The Indian was a tall, splendidly formed warrior, with a wild and daring look upon his strangely-marked face, while reaching to his waist hung masses of raven-black hair, giving him an untamed and ferocious appearance.

He was dressed in buckskin, the leggings, hunting-shirt, and head-wrath band around his head being heavily fringed with scalp-locks, while he wore in his belt a brace of revolvers, long knife and tomahawk.

Around his neck hung a chain of human bones, bear and wolf claws, and as a charm, or pendant, was the white, grinning skull of an infant scarcely more than a few weeks old.

Such was Wild Wolf, once a Comanche chief, who, for saving from torture the Prairie Rover, who had once protected him, had been sentenced to the stake by his own tribe.

But the scout whom he had rescued, would not see him die, and together the two had fled from the Indian village, and wandering to the frontier northward, the two had ever remained firm friends.

Though Wild Wolf had been made a chief among the Sioux, for warning them of an approaching attack of their enemies, he contented himself only with the honor of the name, and passed his days in the secret retreat in the hills where Prairie Rover had established his home, in the very heart of a hostile country; and strange to say, the connection of the Comanche warrior and the renowned Prairie Rover was never suspected, the Indians believing Wild Wolf always on the hunt.

Yet, though Wild Wolf had served the Sioux, it was for no love for them, but at the request of his white brother, the scout, who thought that the act would turn out to their future advantage, and many were the scalps that might be seen at his belt that had once adorned the head of a Sioux warrior.

The cabin in the hills, so well concealed from discovery, and with its position naturally defended, was where the two comrades had lived for several years prior to the presentation of the scout to the reader; and in their secluded retreat they felt perfectly secure, while around them they had gathered as many comforts as could be expected in their isolated frontier home.

The walls of the cabin were adorned with the dressed skins of bears, buffaloes, deer, wolves and birds, while several rifles and pistols, with fishing-tackle and equestrian accoutrements, adorned the space over the fireplace.

Next to the room occupied by the scout and Wild Wolf, was a second apartment, wherein Comrade, and Flying Horse, the steed of the Indian, found shelter, and the back of the hut was against the cliff, wherein yawned the mouth of a large cave, which led entirely through the hills to the lowlands beyond, and which afforded a means of escape should an enemy advance in their front.

"Did the Wild Wolf do as his white brother requested?" said the scout, seating himself before the fire and vigorously attacking the savory supper.

"The Wild Wolf never forgets; he saw the Sioux warriors depart for the settlements, and at their head was a pale-face chief and his braves," quietly responded the Indian.

"When did they depart?"

"When the sun went to sleep."

"That was five hours ago; well, the storm will delay them to-night, and it will be day after to-morrow before they strike the settlement."

"Now, Wild Wolf, tell me how many there were."

"There were a thousand braves."

"Then they have left a stronger force behind than I expected they would; but this shall not deter me," said the scout, speaking more to himself than to his companion.

"Now, Wild Wolf, we must take a few hours' rest and then be off, for I wish you to put Flying Horse to his speed, and seek the home of the white warriors."

"Give the white chief this ring, and tell him all that he would know regarding the movement of the renegades and their Sioux allies, and then hasten toward the northern settlements, and find the Indian band and tell them that hundreds of pale-face braves are laying waste their villages and slaying their squaws and papooses."

"Where are the white braves?"

"They are not far from here, and I will lead them; when you have warned the Indians that their homes are attacked return here and await me."

"Wild Wolf do all; go at once."

"No, let us take up our bridge first, then seek a few hours' rest, and then we will depart together through the cave leading to the lowlands."

"Wild Wolf understand," quietly responded the chief; and shortly after the two friends were calmly sleeping away the midnight hours.

But long ere daybreak they awoke, and when the sun arose it fell upon them many miles from the hills; the Indian mounted upon a brown mustang, pressing on in a long swinging gallop toward the fort, and Prairie Rover directing his course toward the ruined outpost, the appointed rendezvous with Captain Ramsey Raymond and his daring band.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 293.)

ESQUIMAUX WIFE-CATCHING.—The marriage ceremony of the Esquimaux is performed curiously. When a boy kills a bear, it is considered sufficient proof of his ability to maintain a family; he is therefore told to go and catch a wife. Watching his opportunity at night, he pounces on a victim and attempts to carry her off. She, however, struggles and shrieks until she has collected around her a group of sympathizers. She then turns upon her captor and bites and scratches until he is compelled to release her, when she darts into the crowd and attempts to escape. The expectant bridegroom follows her, but not unmolested. All the old women take scourges of dried seal-skins and flay him unmercifully as he passes, making at the same time every effort to arrest him in his course. If, despite these little impediments to matrimonial bliss, he should catch his victim, the biting and scratching scene is renewed, and in all probability he is compelled to release her, and the chase is renewed.

THOUGHTS.

BY AVRAHAM YASMAR.

This is a world full of crosses,
A world full of sadness and gloom;
Even the sunniest pathways
Lead us down into the tomb.
This is a world where the sunshine
Comes for a few brief days,
To gladden our lonesome hearts
By the brightness of its rays.

This is a world full of evils,
A world full of sorrow and sin;
A world full of dark, dark pathways,
With many feet treading therein.
Here we will mourn in our anguish,
Here we will falter in a gloom,
Till death tolls his dark wings around us,
And we silently sleep in the tomb.

Courting by Contraries.

BY ARCHIE C. IRONS.

"It is a dangerous experiment, Miss Wynne. You surely cannot mean it?"

"Can't I? But I do, nevertheless."

Bertrand Forde glanced at his companion. There was no doubting that determined look.

Taken with the scenery they formed a pretty picture; this tall, fair, magnificently-formed man and his lady companion. Slender, petite, and graceful as a willow, Alda Wynne looked like a queen as she stood erect, the light breeze just lifting the dark, waving hair from her face; her cheeks aglow, and her eyes sparkling with the least bit of defiance.

Bertrand Forde was equally handsome, with an air about him that bespoke the true gentleman. His eyes wandered from her now to the little meadow valley—almost a gorge—that lay below them, studded with tall, magnificent trees, their graceful tops waving in the bright June sunshine, fifty feet below the level of the cliff on which they stood. The sparkling waters of a little creek showed, at intervals, between them as it hurried along in its gravelly bed far below, and, further down, Bertrand caught an occasional glimpse of the remainder of his party.

"I wish I could persuade you from this, Alda," he said, turning toward her. "It is work for a strong, athletic man to descend those rocks, and a single misstep might be fatal. Think of the risk you run, and don't do it."

Alda made no reply, but stood beating an impatient tattoo upon the ground with her foot. Somehow, Bertrand Forde always roused a feeling of willfulness in her, strangely at variance with her usual amiability. Being an heirless she had been used to being humored and indulged all her life. Lovers and offers of marriage she had had by the score, and she was going to say—and her experience of men had been such that, in general, she thought them rather tiresome. But Bertrand Forde gave her no cause for complaint. He escorted her as he was always gallant and polite, but he never annoyed her with attentions, as most men did. Alda was no flirt; she had no unwomanly desire to conquer, but, somehow—

She flashed a swift glance at him, and then looked far away across the valley to the mountain-tops that reared their heads in the hazy air.

"Don't be absurd, Mr. Forde," she said, pettishly, "just because I want to join our party below, and prefer clambering down the rocks to going ten times as far around."

He smiled quietly, but did not oppose her further, and they walked in silence a few yards along the cliff.

"Now," he said, "take a look and see for yourself whether I was right or not."

Alda looked. From her feet the bank descended so steep as to appear almost perpendicular, covered with jagged rocks and boulders, with here and there a witch-hazel bush growing in the crevices. She drew back involuntarily, and then felt like biting herself when she saw Bertrand's eyes fixed upon her face. That look decided her; she would go at all hazards. He should never have it to say that he had persuaded her from it.

"Do you intend to stay here and watch me, or go around and join the company?" she asked.

"If you are determined to go—" he hesitated, looking at her. An inclination of the head was his only answer. "Then I shall go with you," he finished.

With steady nerves she commenced the descent. He kept by her side, but did not offer her any assistance. They were half-way down, and strong and used to athletic exercise as he was, Bertrand Forde felt the strain upon him, and wondered, mentally, how there could be so much strength and endurance concealed in the slight form and delicate hands. There was no chance for rest, and he watched her narrowly. He noticed that her face was becoming flushed, and soon her breath came quick and labored. No words had been spoken by either since commencing the descent, and now what he had half-expected came.

In reaching for a little cedar, that grew from a crevice in the rock, her foot slipped, and, missing her hold upon it, she would have fallen had he not thrown his arm about her, and then, in spite of her struggles, he carried her a few feet below and seated her upon a rock where she could rest before descending further.

"You see," he said, coolly, "that it was a good thing I came along after all."

She had been frightened a moment before, but she was almost angry at that. He had no move to assist her further, and five minutes later when they stood in the little valley below, he congratulated her on accomplishing what few women would undertake. As for Alda, she blamed herself for her almost failure, and blamed Bertrand Forde, too, and told herself a hundred times that she would have made the descent without mishap, if it had not been for him. I am in doubt whether she believed it, literally, but there was a certain pleasure in laying it at his door, at all events.

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He could not help noticing the satire in her remarks, but he replied to them all in his cool, nonchalant manner, that made her more vexed with herself than ever; and later in the day, when they joined the remainder of the company, and reached the hotel, Alda came to the conclusion that she had made a fool of herself (these were her very words mentally), and the rest of the day she was her own bright, winsome self.

And so the long season that had opened with a little adventure to at least two of the company, passed swiftly on. There was a never-ending round of excursions, and for most of these were Alda Wynne and Bertrand Forde. These two had been together a great deal of late, and Alda had decided that she thought Mr. Forde the most disagreeable man living. Somehow, she was very positive on this point, and assured herself, at least three times a day, that he was a horrid bear, and that she didn't care in the least for what he might think of her. She took particular pains to be gracious to Dirck Walworth, a shallow fop, whom she

knew Bertrand detested; she threw away the flowers he gave her; she made it a point never to play anything he liked, and made a martyr of herself to "Put Me in My Little Bed," because she had heard him say he hated it, and sometimes for days together she seemed to avoid his presence. They managed to say a great many things to each other in a polite way, but when the utter absurdity of it would dawn upon them they generally managed to laugh it off. Bertrand always remained cool and self-possessed, but abominably provoking at times, which was very characteristic of him, at least to Alda thought, and she had to acknowledge that she had found her match at last, for he always rose majestically from under her pointed remarks made in such a polite way, and returned them with cool composure, as if it was a matter of course.

Alda grew discontented as the days flew by. On a lowering, dark, and lonesome morning, with dull gray clouds spread thickly over the sky, she wrapped a scarlet shawl about her, and wandered down to a lake, set like a gem in the mountains, a skiff that was moored near, rocked softly on the waves, and unfasting it, she entered it, and rowed idly around under the leaden sky. She was dissatisfied with everything and every one, and more particularly with herself on this lonesome day.

The clouds thickened gradually; the wind blew fresh and damp, and a few scattering drops warned her to seek shelter. In her abstraction she had not noticed where she was drifting, but she saw now, that she was some distance from the landing, and near a small island. To this she ran her boat, and fastening it, took shelter in a little cabin, which had probably been erected by fishers, and which stood near the water's edge.

For a full hour she sat there, watching the falling rain and tiny waves, with their white tops blown into spray by the soothing wind, and then, as the sky partially cleared, she started down to the beach to re-enter her boat.

She could not repress a cry of dismay as she looked where she had left it. It was not there, but the broken chain, still fast to the little tree, told the story, and with clasped hands and colorless face, she looked away toward the landing. Was that her skiff riding over the waves? She thought it was, at first, but a second glance showed her that this one had an occupant, and that he was heading directly for the island. He was rowing leisurely along, and as he came nearer she recognized Bertrand Forde. He ran his skiff ashore, and leaped out, holding the tiny cable in one hand.

"I am glad to find you safe, Miss Wynne. I was not aware that you had come out for a row, till I missed you from the company, and coming down to the lake to look for you, saw your boat drifting along near the landing. It was raining, so I waited till it ceased, and then set out to search for you."

Waited for the rain to cease, indeed! And she might have drowned before help came! The sarcasm in her face ought to have warned him, but it didn't.

"I am glad to find that your anxiety was not so great but what you succeeded in curbing it. You might have caught a bad cold, had you ventured out in the storm."

Imagine the most sarcastic thing you ever heard uttered, and then magnify it a hundred-fold, and you will get some idea of the tone in which Alda delivered herself of this.

And Mr. Bertrand Forde actually laughed! "Yes," he replied, coolly, "I always do manage to control myself; but what probably helped me in this case was the sight of a lady, which, with a glass, I readily made out to be you, sitting comfortably in the door of the little cabin, and knowing that you would not want to venture out while the rain continued, I waited until it ceased."

Alda's indignation fairly got the best of her at that, but she maintained a dignified silence. "Are you ready to return?" he asked.

"I don't know; I feel very comfortable where I am."

"Perhaps, then, I had better go back?" he suggested.

"Perhaps you had."

And then they saw the ridiculousness of the whole matter, and both laughed; and good humor being restored, they returned to the house.

The season was drawing to a close, and a grand picnic had been planned, a suitable ending to the round of gaiety that had extended. It was to take place in a beautiful little valley among the mountains, and the company were to proceed thither on horseback or in carriages, as best suited their convenience.

They were up and making preparations at a very unfashionably early hour on the morning which had been appointed. Alda, arrayed in a charming manner, caught herself wondering, as she arranged her hair in a high co

"All! I should think it was enough! You are as pale as a ghost. How did it happen?"

"Some of my usual carelessness," she replied. "I was clambering over the rocks and fell."

He saw the effort that it cost her to keep the tears back even now. The foot and ankle were swelled to almost twice their usual size, and he hastened to loosen the dainty boot that bound them. This afforded her considerable relief, but still the pain was intense.

"It is a very bad sprain," he said, "or it would not have swelled so, in so short a time."

"It has been three hours since I hurt it," she said, looking at her watch, "which has given it considerable opportunity, I think. If you will be kind enough to get a carriage I shall be under great obligations."

"But a carriage cannot possibly get here," he replied.

"Bring a horse, then."

"But you cannot ride."

"Perhaps, then, since you can tell me what I cannot do, you will be so good as to tell me what I can," she said, pettishly, and with a little spark of her old defiance.

"Certainly I can! I shall carry you."

Alda opened her eyes to their widest extent, while the crimson mounted to the very roots of her hair.

"You will do nothing of the sort, Mr. Forde."

"But I shall have to! There is no other way. Can't you trust me, Alda?"

Alda made no reply; the tears were too near. Seeing that she did not answer, he stooped, and lifting her, carried her along over the rough ground in the direction of the party.

"I shall have to ask you to put your arm around my neck," he said, after they had gone a short distance, and Alda had nothing to do but obey. She made no resistance, but presently she burst out crying, and sobbed so violently that Bertrand got alarmed and halted.

"Alda, Alda, you must not cry so," he said, hurriedly, but to his astonishment his words only brought a fresh burst of sobs. It was a perplexing situation, but he proved equal to the emergency at last, for he actually had the audacity to wipe the pearly drops away, and kiss, a half-dozen times, the trembling little mouth. And then, what he had been longing to tell her for weeks, he told her now, and she pleaded his case so eloquently that her sobbing ceased, and her face was radiant, as she lifted it to his.

"I shall never regret the sprained ankle," she said, as she stole the other arm softly about his neck—this time without being requested.

And I am certain that she never has.

Idaho Tom,

THE YOUNG OUTLAW OF SILVERLAND!

BY OLL COOMES.

CHAPTER XXX.

FRANK AND BILLY ON THE TRAIL.

FRANK and Billy hurried with all possible speed around the bay, reaching the lake just in time to see the white man and two savages disembark with their captive. They were, however, over a mile away, and by the time they had traversed this distance, the foe had disappeared. They had filled the two canoes with stones and sunk them in shallow water, where they could easily be got at in case of necessity.

Not far away the boys found the hoof-prints of two or three horses; and this discovery filled young Caselton with disappointment.

The tracks led away up the valley and from the indentations in the ground it was evident that the enemy had ridden fast.

"Billy," said Frank, after they had found out the course pursued by the maiden's captors, "shall we undertake to follow this trail alone?"

"And why not, Frank?" returned Billy.

"I thought you might be in favor of waiting till the boys came up."

"All of us couldn't fight our way into the Wolf Herder's den. Our only hopes in getting the girl is by stratagem, and the less there are to perform, the better."

"We might gain admittance to the outlaw's stronghold by the same means with which we escaped from there. We know where Bold Heart concealed the rope."

"Yes, but looky here now, Frankie; how do we know but that we're getting ahead of the hounds?"

"In what way, Billy?"

"Bead, and we don't know whether the gal was taken to the den or not."

"There is not a doubt of it, Billy. These hoof-prints point in that direction, and it is, within reason and possibility, that Zoe has been taken directly to that place."

"All right, Frank; leave ahead and Billy Brady will follow, or lead when necessary. And if ever we get within that hell-hole again, mind what I tell you, I'll let every wolf out on that pen, and set him to picking over Molock's bones."

The boys took up the trail and set out to follow it. It ran along the valley and finally turned up the gorge leading toward Molock's den. This left no doubt in the minds of the youths as to where Zoe had been taken.

When within a mile or so of Molock's stronghold the youths concealed themselves to await the coming of night.

To the impatient boy-lover, Frank Caselton, the hours seemed to drag on leaden feet—the sun to stand motionless above the distant mountain-tops.

At length, however, shadows began to gather in the valleys, creep stealthily up the mountain steep and thicken along the sky.

The boys now crept from their hiding-place and pushed on toward the den of the Wolf Herder. When they reached the ledge overlooking the place it was pitchy dark. The sky was overcast with a dull, leaden gray cloud. A white mist hovered low in the valleys. The mountains lent the darkness of their mighty forms to the surrounding gloom.

The boys began groping about in search of the rope concealed there a few days previous. For an hour or more their labor threatened to be in vain, but, finally, the sought-for object was found.

One end of the rope was then made fast to a stout bush near the edge of the precipice, and the other end lowered over into the valley.

"Now, Billy," said Frank, "the tug of war begins."

"And I am ready for the fun," said Billy.

"But, suppose when we climb down that rope we find a savage there to receive us with a tomahawk?"

"And yes, might as well suppose that when you go to heaven one of the apostles will knock you back to earth with a club."

"Well, then, which one goes first?" asked Frank.

"Mees, by all means," said Billy; "yees

know that I's been a sailor b'y, and to go up and down a rope is as 'asy as falling on the ice. Yes, Frankie, mees 'll go down and reconnoiter, and if I find the way open, I'll jerk the rope like blazes and thin you'll come down."

"All right, Billy; but be careful. The least false movement may defeat our object and cost us our lives."

"Oh, and to be sure," responded Billy, and throwing himself upon the ground, he seized the rope, and crawling backward disappeared over the ledge.

Frank sat down and grasped the rope, as if by its motions and jars, he hoped to be able to judge of the success of Billy's adventure.

A deadly hush, broken only by the eternal jowling of the hungry beasts below, pervaded the night.

With anxious, beating heart, young Caselton waited alone upon the cliff. The white mist thickened around him until he seemed floating on a sea of fog.

He was suddenly started from his silent thoughts by a sudden boom that came quivering up from the direction of Tahoe.

"Ah!" he exclaimed to himself, "they are in trouble at the lake!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

ZOE IN PRISON.

THE two men—savage and white man—that Zoe had sighted in the strait between the bay and lake, proved to be Molock, the Wolf Herder, and one of his followers. And they were there for the purpose of assisting their friend in the abduction of the maiden, in case their help was needed.

The day previous Molock, in skulking about the lake, had seen Idaho Tom send his message of love to Zoe by means of his little transport, and had seen him receive the reply.

The novelty of the young man's idea suggested another to the crafty brain of Molock, and he proceeded to put it into execution.

And he was successful, his plans culminating in the capture of Zoe in the manner already seen.

Three horses were in waiting in the woods near where they landed, to carry the captive and captors away; and so thorough had all the villain's plans been laid, and so skillfully and successfully had they been executed, that, long before night, the whole party reached the stronghold in the mountain's fastness.

Zoe was imprisoned in the same dark, dismal room wherein our young friends, the Boy Hunters, had been confined. Despair had taken possession of her young heart, and, half-stupefied with terror, she took but a passing notice of things around her. At times her brain seemed enveloped in a maze of giddy horror that made her situation so vaguely indistinct, she seemed in a terrible nightmare which she could not shake off.

As unsuspicious to all human feeling as the villainous Molock was, he saw that his captive was like a frail, tender flower, and would stand but little exposure and ill-treatment. Therefore, in order to revive the drooping spirits of the girl, he told glowing falsehoods concerning his object in capturing her, and made many fair promises that he never intended to fulfill.

A rude couch had been constructed for her in one corner of her prison-room. A chair and a cup of water had been given her also.

As soon as she was alone, Zoe lifted her eyes and gazed wildly about the room. The rough, barren walls; the high, smoke-begrimed roof; and the dismal light, presented a cold, cheerless sight.

Finally she arose to her feet, and walking to the little window over the wolf-pen, looked out. She saw the seething wave of wolfish forms before her, and she grew sick and faint at heart. Reeling away across the floor, she threw herself upon her chair, and burst into a paroxysm of grief and tears.

Thus the day wore away and night came on, dark and dismal, bringing a corresponding gloom to the heart of the maiden.

Shortly after dark, Molock brought her a dim, sputtering lamp, whose flickering light seemed to set a dozen ghostly shadows dancing over the walls. He also brought her some cold meat and hard, stale bread for supper.

"Don't take on, little Miss," the villain said, seeing her bowed down with grief; "you'll get out of this safe and sound if yer friends will come down handsomely with the solid metal."

"But they have no money, if that is what you mean," Zoe sobbed.

The man drew from his pocket, and held up between his thumb and forefinger, the diamond ring which Zoe wore at the time of her capture. The villain had torn it from her finger while they were yet upon the lake.

"They have," he said, "the rest of the set to which that belongs, and that'll buy you out of here. I don't want you—only holden' yer for ransom, and ye needn't waste a solitary tear."

"My friends have no jewels."

"They hain't, eh? Ugh, humph! I understand. Them boys that's been hangin' around Tahoe, like vultures around a carcass, are your friends; and they know sumthin' 'bout the rest of the jewels, or I'd ort to, fur they stole 'em from me. This ring is part of the set. I pawned it to a friend a year ago for likker, and he run off afore I could redeem it, and s'now it's drifted hum to me."

"How came the ring and jewels yours?" Zoe asked, half-indignantly, while her eyes swam in tears.

"Bought 'em," was the laconic reply, given with a searching glance of the speaker's baleful, blood-shot eyes.

"You did not buy them," was Zoe's response; "you stole them."

"Whist, now, and I believe I'm on a trail," exclaimed Molock, reflectively. "Hain't you the gal that was in the coach that was robbed in Purgatory Pass one night last spring?"

"Yes! and you are one of the robbers!" Zoe responded, her eyes flashing with loathsome scorn.

Molock broke into a low, sinister laugh.

"That was purty well done, wasn't it?" he finally asked. "You wouldn't think now, little 'un, would ye, that I war that ole detective that rid in the coach with you? But I am that very identical sinner, and it war in my hand ye placed yer jewels 'stead of yer father's."

"You are a coward to gloat over so mean an act to a helpless girl," retorted Zoe. "They were my poor dead mother's jewels, and I prized them on that account."

"I prized 'em on account of their value," was the heartless villain's reply.

Zoe turned away and refused further conversation with him; when the villain went out, closing and barring the door behind him.

Zoe heard the sound of his heavy footsteps descending the ladder. A door was slammed shut, then all subsided into quietude.

The silence that followed became oppressive to the captive's heart; but it had lasted only for a few minutes, when suddenly a heavy weight fell upon the roof, with a dull thump, that sent a slight jar through the room.

Zoe started to her feet, and in breathless suspense, listened. But all had again subsided into silence, and remained so for full five minutes, when a sound was again heard upon the roof. It was a very slight sound, however—not louder than a rat would make running over the shingles—and filled Zoe's breast with a vague hope.

The maiden kept her eyes lifted upward to the roof that was barely perceptible in the dim light. Only the faintest outline of the shingles and worm-eaten rafters could be seen; but, notwithstanding this fact, she was enabled to see a board suddenly lifted aside by some invisible hand. Her hope grew stronger, and a cry of joy rose to her lips, but some invisible power suppressed the cry.

With eager, burning eyes she watched the opening on the roof grow larger and larger, as board after board was carefully removed. The hole had been enlarged to nearly two feet each way, when the maiden suddenly beheld a white, frowsy head, and a brown, boyish face, appear in the opening and gaze down upon her.

It was a strange face—a face so indistinctly seen that it banished all her cherished hopes from her breast.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TO THE RESCUE.

THE face that gazed down upon Zoe in her prison-room was that of the daring young hunter, Billy Brady.

The maiden had entertained such high hopes of seeing a face that she knew—the face of a friend coming to her aid—that the disappointment which followed cast a cold, sinister expression over the face so faintly seen in the dim, uncertain light above.

"Hist!" she suddenly heard whispered in a sharp, aspirate tone; "don't speak, little Miss, if yees vally loife worth the saving. I'm Billy Brady, a would Irish b'y, and Frank Caselton is not fur away."

The words sent a thrill of joy to the maiden's heart. She clasped her hands over her breast and murmured a prayer of thanks.

Then she lifted her eyes and again scanned the face of the youth gazing down upon her. And how different it appeared, now that she knew it was the face of a friend.

The first thing Billy did, after he had quieted the maiden's fears, was to lower the end of the rope into the room and then, let himself down.

On tip-toe he advanced to the side of the maiden and whispered, softly:

"I've come to help yees out av here, little lady; and yees hev to go out through the roof up there. I'm going outside to reconnoiter a wee bit, and whil' I return and drop the rope, tie it carefully around yer waist and I'll hoist yees up like a kite."

Almost wild with delight, the maiden signified her willingness to follow his instructions.

Billy turned and examined the door of the prison. Originally it had been made to fasten on the inside. The heavy clasps were still on the door and the socket in the jam. All that was wanted to fasten the door from intrusion was simply a bar. As Billy noticed this he shook his frowzy head in a significant manner, and turning he seized the rope and was about to climb up to the roof when Zoe approached him and asked:

"You said Frank Caselton was near; where is he now?"

"Up on the cliff, not fifty feet above you."

"Thank you," she said, and a faint smile of inward joy flitted over her pale face.

Billy acknowledged her thanks with a polite bow, then turned and scampered up the rope like a cat.

Once more upon the roof the fearless youth was not long in coming to a decision as to his next movement. Drawing up the rope from the house, he dropped it over the eaves of the house, and then cautiously lowered himself to the ground.

Crouching close against the base of the cabin, the youth listened for some sound that would indicate the whereabouts of the enemy. He heard voices within the building—the voices of Molock and his confederates, who appeared to be engaged in a game of cards.

"Och, now, and if Bold Heart was here I'll bet he'd march in and banter the gentlemen for a hand in the game," mused the lad; "but, while they're playing at one game, Billy Brady will play at another."

So saying, he crept around the cabin and along the stone-wall that fenced in the wolf-pen. He soon came to the gate opening into the pen. He found it was fastened on the outside by a bar held in its place by a heavy log leaning against it. Placing his shoulder against the log he threw it aside; then he withdrew the bar which he placed under his arm for future use, and throwing open the gate ran for his life.

Back around the cabin he darted, and, placing the bar, heavy as it was, between his teeth, hastily climbed the rope to the roof of the house.

With a wild, frenzied howl the wolves poured down their prison-pen in a perfect stream of shaggy forms.

Billy hastily descended into Zoe's room, and with the bar, procured for the purpose, fastened the door on the inside.

"Now, my little lady friend," he said, "your time has come. Let me toise the rope around yees, for mees can toise a sailor's knot that'll not let yees fall."

The maiden yielded to his suggestions without a word of dissent, and the lad wound and twined the end of the rope around her form so as to give as little pain as possible. This done he again ascended to the roof, then with a steady nerve he drew the light, fairy form of the maiden from the prison to the house-top. She was trembling with terror and affright, but, in his droll, good-natured way, the youth succeeded in restoring her usual composure and in strengthening her courage for the next terrible leap, as it were, for life and freedom.

Molock and his men, by this time, had detected an unusual noise without, and quitting their cards they grasped their weapons and rushed out to inquire the cause of it.

The hungry beasts, maddened now with their liberty, came pouring around the house and attacked the outlaw and his two savage coadjutors. In an instant one of the latter was down, while a sea of shaggy forms surged around him like a maelstrom—searing and gnawing at his quivering flesh. Molock and the other Indian escaped into the house, but as they had not before closed the doors a dozen desperate, maddened beasts were already in the room. They were driven up the ladder into the loft.

At the head of the stairs Molock stopped to rest. He was panting like an overworked ox. His face wore a wild look, and his eyes glared like coils of fire. He had been shocked by the terrible tide of vengeance turned so suddenly upon him. He could not form the remotest idea as to how this critical state of affairs had been brought about—how the wolves had escaped.

After a few minutes' pause he advanced and unbarred Zoe's prison-door and tried to open it; but it refused to yield. It was fastened on the inside. The outlaw kicked it, and pounded upon it with his fist till the whole building trembled under the blows. But finding it would not yield his fury burst forth in a storm of horrible oaths that were revolting to human ears.

Billy and Zoe heard every blow and every oath from their position on the house. They felt the maiden's heart with terror and increased her anxiety to escape from the desperate villain's reach. She felt that there was no danger she would not risk to gain a point of safety.

Billy untied the rope from her waist, and leaving the end of it in her possession, with instructions how to proceed, he swung from the cabin and ascended to the ledge.

"What in the name of Heaven has happened down there, Billy?" was the first words that Frank said to him; "where have you been all this time? and what doing? Is Zoe there?"

"Yes, she'll be along in a minute," replied Billy, pulling the rope slightly, as a signal to the maiden to prepare to follow.

With a steady hand Zoe tied the rope around her form, then signaled to her friends that all was ready.

The rope was gradually drawn taut. The maiden swung from the roof as she was lifted from her feet. An involuntary cry of terror pealed from her lips when she felt herself swinging to and fro in mid-air.

Carefully Frank and Billy drew up the dangling burden. When it appeared near the edge of the precipice, Frank threw himself along the rock, and reaching over, lifted the maiden in his strong arms to the summit of the ledge. But Zoe was perfectly helpless. She had fainted—or was she dead?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"VENGEANCE IS MINE, SAITH THE LORD."

THE great round moon burst suddenly through the veil of clouds, and lit up the desolate valley in which was located the den of Molock, the Wolf Herder. It shone upon a scene of tenderness and love, and upon a scene of tragic horror—the former upon the ledge, the latter in the rock-girded valley.

Over the motionless form of the beautiful Zoe Leland knelt the figure of noble Frank Caselton, chafing the temples and palms of the fair being in hopes of reawakening the almost faded spark of life. He had wrapped the tender form in his woolen hunting-jacket to protect it from the chill, damp night air. In fact everything within his power was done to save her; and finally, to his infinite joy, he had the extreme pleasure of knowing that his ministrations were not in vain. She opened her eyes, and gazing wildly about her into the misty moonlight, asked in a flighty voice:

"Father, why don't Frank Caselton ever come back to the island?"

Frank was astonished. Why this question from the lips of the half-delirious girl? A second thought set his heart to throbbing wildly with joy, and his brain became intoxicated with a sense of indescribable pleasure. Bending over the girl, he whispered, tenderly:

"Zoe, Frank Caselton is here by your side."

She started with a little cry, as if aroused by the magic of his voice. She gazed up into his face and around with a conscious, yet bewildered look.

"You are safe, Zoe; rest easy," Frank said.

"Then it really is you, Frank," she said, feebly.

"It is. You have had quite an adventure, Zoe, and a narrow escape. You have been in the den of Molock, the Wolf Herder."

"I mistook the fact when I saw a great herd of wolves from my prison window."

"He will not carry off another girl soon," Frank said; "my friend, Billy Brady, who rescued you from the den, is already punishing the wretched villain."

True enough, the inimitable Billy was busily engaged in a work of vengeance upon the head of Molock.

He carried stone after stone, many of them over a hundred pounds in weight, and rolled them over the precipice onto the roof of the cabin. Of course the huge missiles crashed through the roof and floor as though they had been paper; and the outlaw and savage in the loft now discovered that the vengeance of an enraged enemy had overtaken them. They hovered close against the wall to escape death, but the rocks continued to rain down upon the house until it became necessary for the two wretched men to seek safety elsewhere.

The wolves were sweeping to and fro across the valley like scudding clouds. The outlaws' horses and tame, buffaloes had drawn their pickets and were thundering here and there with wild whinny and terrified bellow, in frantic efforts to escape from the pursuing animals.

With hasty footsteps Molock and his man descended the ladder. The wolves had all left the cabin and joined in the chase of the horses and buffaloes.

"Unque," said Molock, in terror, "we can reach the tunnel before the wolves catch us, but we'll have to run for it."

"Yes," was Unque's reply, and he fell dead at Molock's feet, crushed into a shapeless mass by a huge stone that came crashing from above.

With alarm the now terrified outlaw rushed from the cabin and ran rapidly toward the tunnel opening into the valley.

In the now clear moonlight, Billy and Frank saw the fleeing villain, when the latter cried out:

"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will surely repay."

The outlaw merely glanced back as he ran on. A horse pursued by two score of wolves suddenly swept between him and the mouth of the cavern. The hungry beasts saw their keeper and turned upon him.

Molock saw his danger—that he was cut off from the tunnel, and turning to the right, he ran toward the great wall of towering rock.

In his hand he carried an Indian hatchet—a formidable weapon in the hand of a man struggling for his life.

The wolves were weak and clumsy from long confinement and starvation, but rendered frantic by hunger.

Reaching the wall, Molock placed his back against it, and with his hatchet began to hew right and left among the beasts. He was a powerful and active man, and quick and deadly fell the sudden blows upon the wrangling, snarling horde. He kept a space before him clear. The earth soon became piled with dead and wounded beasts around him. He would soon be protected by a wall of shaggy bodies; but the poll of the hatchet became wet with dripping gore. It followed down the handle and made it slippery; and in the midst of the conflict the weapon shot from the outlaw's hand and flew far beyond his reach.

A cry of awful agony burst from the strong lungs of the wicked wretch. He was at the

mercy of his beasts, but he fought on—beat them off with his great fists—fought with foot and hand nerved by the desperation born of despair.

But this uneven conflict could not last long. Little by little the great man's strength fails him. His breath comes quick and hard—almost in gasps. The wolves press closer and closer, and finally roll forward like a wave.

A wall of agony rose from the valley. The moon hid her face behind a great black cloud.

And Frank and Billy, exchanging significant glances, turned their backs upon the valley of death.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BILLY BRADY IN TROUBLE.

FRANK CASELTON and Billy Brady at once set out for Lake Tahoe with the rescued maiden. The way was rough and difficult, and rendered very dangerous by the gloom of night.

Billy acted as guide, while Frank escorted the fair Zoe along the rugged way.

After hours of weary traveling they reached the lake, when they were met by an unexpected difficulty. Savages were swarming along the shores, and in his search for a canoe, in which to escape to the island, Billy Brady ran into a party of savages and was captured. Frank and Zoe were not far away, but fortunately their presence was not discovered, and they escaped their friend's misfortune.

Billy struggled like a young tiger, but the odds were against him and he was compelled to succumb. He was disarmed, and at once marched back into a narrow defile, where a halt was made for a fire lighted.

As the flames flared out and cast their light upon the scene, the young prisoner glanced around him; and his heart sunk with hopelessness in his breast when his eyes fell upon the tall, powerful form and stolid, sinister face of the Indian, Tall Pine. The warrior was seated upon a rock a little to one side, smoking a clay pipe. His eyes were cast downward, and a sullen, morose look clouded his stoical face. He seemed engaged in thought. He never looked up—never glanced toward the captive.

A short consultation was at once held regarding the disposal of the prisoner, and they were not long in coming

A GENERAL MISUNDERSTANDING.

BY HENRI MONTCALE.

Time, afternoon in hot July.
Scene, the foot of the croquet lawn;
Curtain rises lazily.
And discloses, first, in the midst of a yawn,
Cousin Dick in the corner there,
His chair tipped back against a friendly oak,
Hands in his pockets, feet in the air,
And head in the clouds—of smoke.
Secondly, Jennie, not far away,
Sits curled up on a rustic seat;
And her eyelids droop in a sleepy way,
And her novel lies at her feet.
Thirdly and lastly, lastly and best,
Grandfather, too, glides off in a doze;
His dear old head sinks down on his breast,
And his spectacles fall from his nose.
Dick he smoketh and pondereth;
Then empties his pipe and with purpose deep
Rises, murmuring under his breath:
"She thinks I think she's asleep."
And Jennie, musing all the while,
Through her half-closed eyelids takes a peep;
And she softly whispers with covert smile:
"He thinks I think he thinks I'm asleep."
Softly he crosses the grassy space,
Softly stands by the slumbering Miss,
Softly stoops to the beautiful face,
And softly steals—a kiss.
Softly, perhaps, but scarcely wise,
For the low sound breaks the silence deep;
And grandfather starts and rubs his eyes;
"Ah! They think that I'm asleep."

Why He Resigned Her.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

Mrs. ELLIS looked up from her sewing at the big eight-day clock that was ticking placidly away from its shady corner.
"Come, Nellie. It is nearly four o'clock, and you remember Mr. Redmond is to call for you at half-past, for your drive."
Nellie lifted a pretty, piquant face from the pages she was reading.
"How easily you always recall Mr. Redmond's engagements, mamma! I wish you knew how I despised him."
"You speak very ignorantly and childishly, Nellie. If you think seriously, you can give no reason for despising Mr. Redmond, whom both I and your father respect and admire, and feel greatly honored by his offer of marriage to you."
Nellie shrugged her plump shoulders disdainfully.
"I don't know what you may call admiration or respect, mamma, if you can see anything in Mr. Redmond's fat, red face and horrible big corpor—" Mrs. Ellis bestowed a severe, reproving glance at Nellie.
"I did not suppose you referred to Mr. Redmond's personal appearance, Nellie; and if you had, I cannot see what there is so objectionable if Mr. Redmond is stout."
Nellie laughed saucily.
"Oh, mamma, stout! Don't call it anything but obese. As if I'd ever marry a fat man!"
Her merry laugh tinkled like a chime of silver bells, and Mrs. Ellis's forehead gathered into bigger frowns than ever.
"You may consider yourself fortunate in being asked to share the Redmond estate, Nellie. When I was a girl, I would have jumped at the chance."
"Mr. Redmond must have been slenderer and better-looking when you were a girl, mamma, but that's no reason why I should have him. Why—he's had two wives already!"
Just a hint of indignation was creeping into her voice, but Mrs. Ellis would not hear it.
"And a good husband he made them both—better than any young fellow will ever make you."
A flush of delicious happiness surged over Nellie's cheeks as her mother's words made her think of Harry Newell—handsome Harry, to whom she had solemnly promised her hand, to whom she had given her heart, whose ring she wore on a blue ribbon around her neck, and who was working away in his newly-opened office, busy as a bee, in happy anticipation of the time when he would be ready to take his little sweetheart to himself.
But Nellie didn't say much about it—cunning, astute little rogue that she was.
She was as decided as fate on the subject—and nothing short of a miracle would have made her marry Phineas Redmond, for all his house and farm, his horses and carriages.
She was obliged to accept some portions of his persecutions, however, and she did it with quite a good grace, so that neither mother nor father nor lover knew just what a deceitful little wretch she was; and to-day was almost the first time she ever had said particularly disparaging things of her suitor, although she had declared from the first she would not marry him.
"I think you had better dress, Nellie; I don't want you to keep Mr. Redmond waiting. He is going to take you over to the farm, and show you the house."
Nellie closed her book lazily.
"As if I care to see his dusty, musty old house, where there's been so many funerals! It's all nonsense, mamma, my going."
"Nellie! aren't you ashamed of yourself? Go right away and put on your gray silk—there's the carriage now."
The girl arose with a languid grace of her own, her red lips curling half sneeringly.
"Of course I'll go if you wish it, mamma. My gray silk and blue ribbons!"
She went up to her room, with an expression odd to see on her fresh, fair face, as she deliberately made her dainty toilet.
"It has come to the crisis at last—and I'll never have the old Blue Beard if I die first! I know he wants me, and will not take my refusal, since he is so sure of papa's and mamma's consent; nor do I really think they would allow me to positively reject him. I'd have to run off with Harry, and be married on the sly—and I'd never consent to that, and I don't believe darling old Harry would either. What will I do?"
She frowned, much puzzled, as she arranged her dainty silk tie, and remembered it was the very thing Harry loved best to see her wear—a pale silvery-blue, that was such a perfect foil to her golden hair, her bright violet eyes and snow-and-roses complexion.
Suddenly, a laugh came rippling over her beautiful mouth; her eyes fairly danced, as if a magical revelation had been given her. Then, the audible, musical laugh subsided into a demure smile as she slowly descended the stairs, buttoning her kids.
Mr. Redmond's heart fairly bounced as he caught the first glimpse of her fresh, sweet beauty, so marvelously enhanced by her stylishly-worn attire; and he secretly felt very glad—first, that he had overcome his scruples about wearing his Sunday clothes; second, that Nellie Redmond would be a decided improvement, as far as youth and beauty went, on her predecessors.

She met him with cordial sweetness, and they drove off at once, leaving Mrs. Ellis to smile and nod her head contentedly, as she watched them out of sight.
"All it wants to clinch that nail is for Nellie to see the homestead, and the comforts and conveniences that will be hers—all the prudent savings and earnings of two economical women."
"And while the mother returned to her sewing, to build very airy castles about her only child, Nellie was riding along in the rather old-fashioned carriage beside her elderly lover.
"It's a very pretty road, I think," she said, as they drove between rows of cool, shady trees.
"None prettier. It's useful, too, as it leads straight to town. Sarah Jane used to say she liked to take her eggs and butter along this way."
Nellie winced at the name of her predecessor No. 2; then answered, flippantly:
"Oh, I don't know anything about that. I mean I should like to have a phaeton and pony to drive about here myself."
Mr. Redmond gave a little inward grunt.
"Phaeton's aren't of much account. A good strong carryall is worth a dozen of them. There's the house, Nellie. Take a good look at it as we drive up, and remember it has been the home of the Redmonds' high on to two hundred years."
Nellie dissipated his pompous pride very suddenly.
"Well, I should think so! So this is to be my future home?"
She directed the battery of her bewildering eyes full upon his face.
"He laid his hand on his heart.
"If you will so honor it, and me, Miss Ellis."
A tiny smile parted her lips; his effort at gallantry made her think of an elephant essaying to skip like a gazelle.
"You'll find it very pleasant and comfortable inside, with—" They had left the carriage now, and were walking up the path. She interrupted him, irreverently:
"Never mind the inside just now. It is the outside that is under consideration. Why, Mr. Redmond, you don't mean to tell me anybody ever lived in that house with those solid wooden shutters?"
Mr. Redmond flushed even more of a beet-red than was his normal hue.
"I certainly mean to say that two of my wives—" Nellie tilted her parasol impatiently.
"Oh, I don't care anything about them; you know. Every shutter has got to come off, and the house painted pearl-gray, and green Venetian blinds put on."
Mr. Redmond uttered a half-smothered "umph," but went on, leading the way to the front entrance, pausing under a huge, far-spreading maple tree, with a look of intense satisfaction on his face.
"Isn't this grand, Miss Ellis? This tree is over two hundred years old, and was planted by my great-great-grandfather when he was a boy."
Nellie frowned darkly.
"Grand! It's the most disagreeable, big lumbering thing I ever saw—full of nasty worms and bugs. I wouldn't have this tree here for anything."
"You wouldn't?" He looked almost alarmed.
"You wouldn't—no when my great-great—" "Not if Methusalem himself planted it," she interrupted, decidedly. "Down it comes, before I come."
A curiously helpless expression crossed Mr. Redmond's face.
"I'm sorry you aren't better pleased. Shall we go inside? Maybe you'll like it better."
Nellie followed him into the parlor, and before he could say a word, she burst out:
"What a contemptible place! Who on earth had the arranging of this house, Mr. Redmond, to make such a stuffy little room? Why, where will my piano sit? And the mirrors I shall order from De Graaf's! The walls must be knocked out, and all the rooms on this side of the hall thrown into one, and marble mantels put in. I think you could make a nice room of it, with Aubusson carpeting and rosewood furniture, and a few paintings. Don't you?"
She asked it very suddenly, very innocently; and Mr. Redmond, who had listened half stupefied, answered in a very subdued way:
"Yes, I do think so."
Nellie was all excitement now, and her blue eyes were sparkling.
"Where is the dining-room, Mr. Redmond? I'd like to see the servants—no, I wouldn't either, because I've made up my mind only to employ French servants—a good cook, you know—oh! yes, I see the strawberry and blackberry beds; they're nice, ain't they? and plenty of them. Well, I suppose we'll use a fearful lot of them, and all sorts of vegetables, and milk, and fruit, because I shall have company all summer, except when I'm at Long Branch, in August."
Mr. Redmond had taken his red bandanna nervously from his pocket.
"I sell all the garden truck, you know, Miss Ellis; and what's that about company and Long Branch?"
Nellie paid no heed to his question, whatever, but went on, in an animated, enthusiastic way that was certainly overwhelming:
"I don't know that I care to see the bedrooms. How many are there?"
"Six, I believe, with good, strong, curled maple furniture, and home spun carpets in each one."
"Well, you can sell all that trash, you know, and with sets of marble-top walnut for each room, and Brussels carpets, I guess I can make them do—at least until you build. When shall you build, Phineas?"
He looked at her, agast.
"Build! why, the alterations you have mentioned will cost a fortune!"
"You can afford it, I know. Besides, there is all the company you'll have to entertain, and all my dresses, and the phaeton and ponies, and—" Mr. Redmond folded his handkerchief with slow precision, and then looked in Nellie's pretty, eager face, much as if he were a big, ugly frog, about to ask a favor of a rainbow-winged butterfly.
"Miss Nellie—really—I never saw it so before—but—I am afraid I cannot make you happy—" Nellie looked straight at him.
"I don't think you can."
He sidged in his seat like a schoolboy before the examining committee.
"Perhaps I'd better recall my—" "Not to me," Nellie interpolated. "You made no bargain with me. Go to my father and tell him you've come to your senses."
A moment of silence; then Nellie laughingly declared she must go, and Mr. Redmond drove her home in a state of confused silence, while Nellie laughed and gossiped every rod of the way.

Then, while Mr. Ellis and the elderly suitor arranged things down-stairs, Nellie coolly changed her dress above, laughing all the while to think how she had managed it.
"I said I wouldn't have him, mamma, and I won't. And I have said I will have Harry Newell, and—" She never finished the defiant sentence in words, but, before that summer came to an end, somehow or other she wore Harry's ring on her finger instead of on the ribbon.
And the old folks didn't make much fuss after all—not even when Mr. Redmond married Miss Johanna Frisby.

Erminie:

THE GIPSY QUEEN'S VOW.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING, AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "AN AWFUL MYSTERY," "VICTORIA," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XIII.

RETRIBUTION.

"Ay, think upon the cause—Forget it not. When you lie down to rest, Let it be black among your dreams; and when The morn returns, so let it stand between The sun and you, as an ill-omened cloud Upon a summer-day of festival."—BYRON.
A MONTH passed. Night and day the search had been carried on; enormous rewards were offered; detectives were sent in every direction; but all in vain. No trace of the lost child was to be found.
Lady Maude had awoke from that deadly swoon, only to fall into another, and another, until her friends grew seriously alarmed for her life. From this, she sunk into a sort of low stupor; and for weeks, she lay still and motionless, unconscious of everything passing around her. White, frail, and shadowy, she lay, a breathing corpse, dead to the world and all it contained. She scarcely realized her loss, she felt like one who has received a heavy blow, stunning her for a time, and rendering her unable to comprehend the full extent of her loss. She received what they gave her in a passive sort of way, heard without understanding what they said, and watched them moving about from under her heavy eyelids without recognizing them. She did not even know her husband, who, the very shadow of his former self, gave up everything to remain by her bedside, night and day. They began to be alarmed for her reason, at last; but her physician said there was no danger—she would arouse from this dull, death-like lethargy, at last; they must only let nature have her way.
Earl De Courcy never left his room now. Feeling as if in some sort he was the cause of this awful calamity, he remained, day and night, in his chamber, a miserable, heart-broken, wretched old man.
Late one evening, early in May, as he sat bowed and collapsed in his chair, a servant entered to announce a stranger below, who earnestly desired to see his lordship.
"Is it a woman?" asked the earl, turning glacially.
"No, my lord, a man, I think, wrapped in a long cloak, and with a hat slouched down over his face. He said he had something of the utmost importance to reveal to your lordship."
"Show him up," said the earl, eagerly; while his heart gave a sudden bound, as he thought it might be some one with news of Erminie.
The next moment the door was thrown open, and a tall, dark figure, muffled in a cloak reaching to the ground, and with a hat pulled far over the face, entered, and stood silently confronting the earl.
"Well! Do you bring news of my son's child? Speak quickly, for God's sake, if you do!" said the earl, half rising in his eagerness.
Two fierce, black eyes, like living coals, glared at him from under the hat; but the tall stranger spoke not a word.
A deadly fear, like an iron hand, clutched the heart of the earl. That tall, motionless figure, those glaring eyes; that ominous silence, made his very blood curdle. White and trembling, he fell back in his seat, for all his undaunted strength was gone now.
"Leave the room," said the stranger, in a deep, stern voice, turning to the servant, who stood gazing from one to the other.
The man vanished—the door closed. And Earl De Courcy was alone with his mysterious visitor, who still stood erect, towering and silent, before him.
"Man or devil, speak! With what evil purpose have you sought me to-night?" said the earl, at last finding voice.
Silently the stranger lifted his hat, and cast it on the floor. A mass of thick, streaming, black hair, on which, one wild March night, the pitiless rain had beat, fell over his shoulders. The long cloak was dropped off, and, stern, dark and menacing, he saw the lofty, commanding form, the fierce, black eyes, and dark, lowering brow of the wronged gipsy queen, Ketura, his relentless, implacable foe.
The last hue of life faded from the white face of the earl at the terrible sight; a horror unspeakable thrilled through his very soul. Twice he essayed to speak; his lips moved, but no sound came forth.
Silent, still, she stood before him, as rigid as a figure in bronze, her arms folded over her breast, her lips tightly compressed, every feature in perfect repose. You might have thought her some dark statue, but that life-burning life was concentrated in those wild, dark eyes, that never for a single instant removed their uncompromising glare from his face.
So they stood for nearly five minutes, and then words came, at last, to the trembling lips of the earl.
"Dark, dreadful woman! what new crime have you come to perpetrate this night?"
"No crime, lord earl. I come to answer the questions you asked as I entered."
"Of the child? You have stolen it?" he wildly demanded.
Her malignant eyes were on him still; her arms were still folded over her breast; no feature had moved; but now a strange, inexplicable smile flickered round her thin lips, as she quickly answered:
"I have!"
"And, woman!—demon in woman's form! what wrong had that helpless babe done you?" he cried out, in passionate grief.
No change came over the set, dark face, as from the lips, still wreathed with that dreadful, ominous smile, slowly dropped the words:
"The sins of the father shall be visited upon the children's children, even to the third and fourth generation. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a life for a life, saith the Lord of Hosts!"
"Devil incarnate! blaspheme not! Oh, Heaven of heavens! how had you the heart to murder that child?"

"You had the heart, lord earl, to murder mine."

"I believed him guilty. You know I did! And she was an innocent babe, as pure from all guile as an angel from heaven!"
"So was my lord. He was as free from that crime as that babe; and yet for it you took his life."

It was awful to hear her speak in that low, even voice, so unnaturally deep and calm. No pitch of passion could be half so terrific as that unearthly quiet.

"Devil!—fiend! you shall die for this!" he cried, madly springing up. "What ho! without there! Secure this hag of perdition before—"

A low, strangled gurgle finished the sentence; for, with the bound of a pythoness, she had sprung forward and grasped him by the throat. She had the strength of a giant. He was a weak, broken-down old man, as powerless in her strong, horny fingers as an infant.

He grew black in the face, his eye-balls projected, to extricate himself. She laughed a low, jeering laugh at his ineffectual efforts, and said, insultingly, as she released him:

"Softly, softly, lord earl! such violent straining of your lungs is not good for your constitution. You are quite helpless in my hands, you perceive; and if you attempt to raise your voice in that unpleasant manner again, I shall be forced to give you a still more loving clutch next time. Your best policy is, to keep as quiet as possible just now."

He ground his teeth in impotent fury, as he gasped for breath.

"Besides, you take things for granted too easily, my lord. What proof have you that I am a murderer? You are, and in the sight of God; but that is not saying I am!"

"Oh, woman! guilty, blood-stained fiend! your own words confirm it!" he passionately cried out.
"Gently, my lord, gently! Have you heard me say I murdered her?"
"You did not deny it."

"That is negative proof, very unsubstantial, as you evidently know, although you found it sufficient to condemn my son!"
"You are too much of a demon to spare her innocent life one moment when in your power. Oh, I know—I know she is dead! Dear little angel! Sweet, helpless little Erminie!"

He almost lost his dread of her in his passion of grief. His chest heaved as he buried his face in his hands, and something like a convulsive sob shook his frame. "Talk not of grief! thou hast seen the tears of stern-browed men."

But the woman felt no remorse. No; an exultant sense of triumph—a fiendish joy filled her heart, at the proof of what she had made him suffer. She had still a fiercer pang in store for him; and waiting till he had lifted his pale face again, she began, in a low, mocking voice:

"And thinkest thou, oh, Lord De Courcy, there is no darker doom than death? Do you think vengeance such as mine is to be sated by such paltry revenge as that? Pshaw, man! You are only a novice in the art of torture, I see; though you commenced a dangerous game when you practiced first on me. Why, if I had slain her, that would have been momentary revenge; and fifty thousand lives such as hers could not sate mine. Other children might be born, years would pass, and she, in course of time, would be almost forgotten. No, my lord; such vengeance as that would never satisfy the gipsy Ketura!"
"Saints in heaven! Am I sane or mad? Oh, woman, woman! speak, and tell me truly. Does the child yet live?"
"It does!"

"Thank God! Oh, bless God for that!" he cried, passionately, while tears of joy fell fast from his eyes.

The same evil, sinister smile curled the lips of the gipsy.

"What a fool the man is!" she said, bitterly, "thinking God that her life is spared, when she will yet live to curse the hour she was born. Oh, man! can you comprehend the depths of a gipsy's hate—you, with your cold, sluggish Northern blood? Yes; she shall live; but it will be for a doom so dark that even the fiends themselves will shudder to hear it; she will live to invoke death as a blessing, and yet will not dare to die! And then I will return your Erminie to her dotting grandsire, a thing so foul and polluted that the very earth will refuse her a grave. Then, Lord De Courcy, my revenge will be complete!"

His hands dropped from his face as if he had been stricken with sudden death; the sight seemed leaving his eyes; the very life seemed palsied in his heart. He was conscious, for a dizzy moment, of nothing but of the blinding sight of that terrific woman, who, with her flaming eyes piercing him like two drawn stilettes, towered there above him, like a vision from the infernal regions.

She was calm still; that terrible, exultant smile had not left her lips; but he would sooner have seen her foaming with passion than as she looked at that moment, standing there.

"This is our second interview, lord earl," she said, while he sat speechless. "The first time I pleaded on my knees to you, and you spurned me from you as if I had been a dog. This time it should be your turn to plead for your own affair, not mine. The third time—when it comes—you will have realized what a gipsy's revenge is like."

"Oh, woman! if there be one spark of human nature in your savage breast, for God's sake, spare that child!" cried the earl, wrought up to a perfect agony by her words.

She stepped back a pace, and looked at him for an instant in silence. At last:

"I pleaded to you on my knees," she said, with an icy smile.

Her words gave him hope. The proud man fell on his knees before her, and held up his clasped hands in supplication. The high-born Earl De Courcy knelt in wildest agony at the feet of the outcast gipsy!

Her hour of triumph had come. Folding her arms over her breast, she looked down upon him as he knelt there, with a look no words can ever describe.

"Spare her—spare her! For God's sake, spare that child!"

There was no reply. Erect, rigid and moveless as a figure in stone, she stood, looking down upon him with her blazing eyes.

"Slay her, if you will; let her go to heaven guiltless and unstained—anything rather than the doom you have destined for her!"

Still no reply. With that triumphant smile—a smile such as Satan himself might have worn—she looked steadily and quietly down at the man at her feet.

"Besides, you dare not keep her!" he said, gathering courage from her silence; fancying, perhaps, it was a sign of relenting. "The officers of the law would find you out; and a worse fate than your son's would be yours."

It was an unfortunate allusion. Her brow grew black as a thunder-cloud; but she only laughed scornfully.

"Find me!" she repeated. "Yes, if they can find last year's snow, last year's part-ridges, or last summer's rain. Let them find me. Why, if it came to that, I could dash its brains out in one instant, before its very mother's eyes."

"Oh, worst of fiends! does there linger a human heart in your body?"
"No; it turned to stone the night I groveled in vain at your feet."

"Take any other revenge you like; haunt me, pursue me, as you will, but restore that child! She never injured you; if there is guilt anywhere, it rests on my head. Let me, therefore, suffer, and give back the child."

She smiled in silence.

"You will relent; you are a woman, and not a devil. Consent to what I ask, and if wealth be any object, you shall have the half—the whole of my fortune. Tell me you consent, and all I have in the world, together with my everlasting gratitude, will be yours."

"You should have thought of this the night you refused to grant my prayer, my lord. Will your wealth and 'everlasting gratitude' restore my son from the dead?"

"God knows, were it in my power, I would willingly give my life to restore him and cancel the past. All that remains for me to do I will do, if you restore the child."

"Lord earl, when I knelt to you, you commanded me to get up. It is my turn now. You have been sufficiently humiliated, even to satisfy me. Rise!"

He arose, and stood before her, so faint with many emotions that he was obliged to grasp the chair for support.

"You will restore her?" he breathlessly asked.

"Never, so help me God, till my vow is fulfilled! Palsied be my heart, if it ever relents! Withered be my hand, if it ever confers a boon on you or one of your house! Blighted be my tongue, if it ever heap but curses on you! Doomed be my soul, if it ever forgives you for what you have done! Once again, lord earl, we are to meet, and then, beware!"

The last words were uttered with a maniac shriek, as she turned and fled from the room. There was a heavy fall; and the servants, rushing in in terror, found Earl De Courcy lying on the floor, with a dark stream of blood flowing from his mouth. They raised him up, but they were too late. He had ruptured an artery of the heart; and with the clotted gore still foaming around his lips, he lay there before them, stark and dead!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEW HOME.

"Yellow sheaves from rich Ceres the cottage had
Crowned,
Green rushes were strewn on the floor;
The casements sweet woodbine crept wantonly round,
And decked the roof with a garland of flowers."
—CUNNINGHAM.

WITH that last terrible denunciation on her lips, Ketura had fled from the room, from the house, out into the night.

Half delirious with mingled triumph, fiendish joy, and the pitch of passion into which she had wrought herself, she walked with rapid, excited strides along, heedless of whither she went, until she suddenly ran with stunning force against another pedestrian who was coming toward her.

The force of the concussion sent the unfortunate individual sprawling, with rather unpleasant suddenness, on his back; while the gipsy herself, somewhat cooled by the shock, paused for a moment and grasped a lamp-post to steady herself.

"Good gracious!" gasped a deeply-aggravated voice from the pavement, "if this ain't too bad! To be run into this way and pitched heels over head on the broad of one's back without a minute's warning! Why, it's a shame!"

"The last words were uttered with a maniac shriek, as she turned and fled from the room. There was a heavy fall; and the servants, rushing in in terror, found Earl De Courcy lying on the floor, with a dark stream of blood flowing from his mouth. They raised him up, but they were too late. He had ruptured an artery of the heart; and with the clotted gore still foaming around his lips, he lay there before them, stark and dead!"

"Why, if it ain't Mrs. Ketura! Well, if this isn't real surprising! How do you do? I am glad to see you, I'm sure; and I dare say it was all an accident. I hope you have been quite well since I saw you last, ma'am," said the pale young man, politely. "I've been very well myself, I'm obliged to you."

"Who are you?" said the gipsy, impatiently, scanning his mild, freckled frontispiece with her stiletto-like eyes.

"Why, you haven't forgotten me, have you?" said the young man, straightening out his beaver, which had got stove in during the late catastrophe; "why, I'm O. C. Toosyeps!"

I dare say you didn't expect to see me here, but we haven't left England yet, you know. We're going the day after to-morrow, aunt Priscilla and me; and I'm glad of it, too, for this here London ain't what it's cracked up to be. I had my pocket picked at least twenty times since I came here. They took my watch, my pocketbook, and my jack-knife, and didn't even leave me so much as a pocket-handkerchief to wipe my nose." And Mr. Toosyeps, who evidently considered this the climax of human depravity, gave his hat a fierce thump, that sent that astonished head-piece away down over his eyes with rather alarming suddenness.

"I don't know you—let me pass," said the gipsy, harshly, trying to walk away from him; but Mr. Toosyeps quickened his pace likewise, and kept up with her.

"Why, you do know me, Mrs. Ketura, and I hope you haven't went and forgotten me so soon," said Mr. Toosyeps, in a deeply-injured tone. "Don't you recollect that nasty wet night, a little over two years ago, when you was walking along the north road, and I made Mr. Harkins, who is a real nice man, only a little hasty at times, take you in and drive you to town? You didn't seem in very good spirits that night, and I was real sorry for your trouble—I really was, Mrs. Ketura."

The gipsy made no reply. Bitterly her thoughts went back to that night—that long, desolate, sorrowful night—when she had bidden her son a last farewell. She had had her revenge; she had wrenched cries of anguish from those who had tortured her; but oh! what revenge could remove the gnawing at her heart! What vengeance could restore her her son! With one of those hollow groans that seem rending the heart they burst from her head dropped on her bosom. There was a world of anguish and despair in the sound, and it went right to the simple heart of the really kind Mr. Toosyeps.

"There, now, don't take on so about it," he began, piteously; "it's real distressing to listen to such groans as that. Everything happens for the best, you know; and though, as I

remarked at the time to my friend Mr. Har-kins, it was real disagreeable of them to take and send you away, when he didn't want to go, still it can't be helped now, and there's no use whatever in making a fuss about it. As my uncle, who hadn't the pleasure of your acquaintance, has left me two thousand pounds, I should be real glad to add you as far as money will go, and you needn't mind about giving me your note for it either. I ain't particular about getting it back again, I'm very much obliged to you."

During this well-meant attempt at consolation, not one word of which the gipsy had heard, Mr. Toospegs had been fumbling uneasily in his pockets, and shifting his carpet-bag in a fidgety manner from one hand to the other. Having managed at last to extract a plump pocket-book from some mysterious recess inside of his coat, he held it out to his companion; but she, with her eyes gloomily fixed on the ground, seemed so totally oblivious of both himself and it, that, with a comical expression of distress, he was forced to replace it again where it came from.

"Now I wouldn't mind it so much if I was you, you know," he resumed, in a confidential tone. "Where's the good of making a time when things can't be helped? I'm going to sail for America the day after to-morrow, in a great, nasty, tarry ship, and I would like to see you in good spirits before I go. It would make it a great deal nicer if I thought you weren't taking on."

The last words caught her ear. She lifted her haggard face and fixed her piercing eyes so suddenly full upon him, that, with an alarmed "Lord bless me," he sprang back and gazed upon her in evident terror.

"Going to America, are you to-morrow?" she asked, rapidly.

"Why—a—no, sir—that is, yes, ma'am," stammered Mr. Toospegs, his self-possession considerably shaken by those needle-like glances.

With lightning-like rapidity there flashed through the gipsy's mind a scheme. London was no longer a safe place for her; she was liable to be arrested, now, at any moment, and with her half-completed revenge this was not to be thought of. She felt her best course would be, to leave England altogether for some years; and she determined to avail herself of the present opportunity.

"If I go with you to America, will you pay my passage?" she abruptly asked, transfixing Mr. Toospegs with her lightning eyes.

"Why, of course, with a great deal of pleasure," responded the young man, with alacrity.

"It will make it real pleasant to have you with us during the passage, I'm sure," said Mr. Toospegs, who felt politeness required of him to say as much, though his conscience gave him a severe twinge for telling such a fib. "Perhaps, as we start the day after to-morrow, you wouldn't mind coming and stopping with us until then, so's to have things handy. Aunt Priscilla will be delighted to make your acquaintance, I know," concluded Mr. Toospegs, whose conscience, at this announcement, gave him another rebuking pinch.

"There will be two children to bring," said the gipsy, hurriedly. "I must go for them."

"Half price," muttered Mr. Toospegs, sotto voce; "what will Aunt Priscilla say?"

"I will meet you here by daybreak the day after to-morrow," said the gipsy, stopping suddenly. "Will you come?"

"Why, certainly," responded Mr. Toospegs, who was too much in awe of her to refuse her anything she might ask; "I'll be in this precise spot by daybreak the day after to-morrow, though I don't approve of early rising as a general thing, it ain't nice at all."

"Very well, I will be here—you need come with me no further," said Keturah, dismissing him with a wave of her hand; and ere he could expostulate at this summary dismissal, she turned a corner and disappeared.

That night a trusty messenger was dispatched by Keturah to the gipsy camp for little Raymond, who arrived the following night. His free, gipsy life seemed to agree wonderfully well with that young gentleman, who appeared in the highest possible health and spirits; his rosy cheeks and sparkling black eyes all aglow from the woodland breezes. Five years old now, he was tall and well-grown for his age, could climb the highest trees like a squirrel, set bird-traps and rabbit-snare, and was as lithe, supple, and active as a young deer. The eyes of Keturah lit up with pride as she gazed upon him; and for the first time the idea occurred to her that he might live to avenge his father's wrongs when she was dead. She would bring him up to hate all of the house of De Courcy; that hate should grow with his growth until it should become the one ruling passion and aim of his life, swamping, by its very intensity, every other feeling.

Master Raymond, who seemed quite as chary of carresses as his grandfather himself, met her with a good deal of indifference; but no sooner did he see little Erminie, than a rash and violent attachment was the result. Accustomed to the dirty, dusky gipsy babies, who rolled all day unheeded in the grass, this little snowy-skinned, golden-haired, blue-eyed infant seemed so wondrously lovely that he had to give her sundry pokes with his finger to convince himself she was real, and not an illusion. Miss Erminie did not seem at all displeased by these attentions, but favored him with a coquettish smile, and with her finger in her rosy mouth, gave him every encouragement he could reasonably expect on so short an acquaintance. Being left alone together, Master Raymond, who did not altogether approve of her wasting her time, lying blinking at him in her cradle, began to think it was only a common act of politeness she owed him to get up, and seeing no symptoms of any such intention on the young lady's part, he resolved to give her a hint to that effect. Catching her, therefore, by one little plump leg and arm, he gave her a jerk that swung her completely out, and then grasping her by the waist, he dumped her down on the floor beside him, upon which she immediately clapped another finger in her mouth; and there they sat, silently staring at each other, until both were dispatched to bed.

Early in the morning Master Raymond and Miss Erminie found themselves awakened from an exceedingly sound slumber, and undergoing the unpleasant operation of dressing. The young gentleman kicked and plunged manfully for a while, but finding it all of no use, he gave up the struggle and yielded to fate in a second nap. Erminie, after crying a little, followed his example; and the gipsy, taking her in her arms, and followed by one of the tribe bearing the sleeping Raymond, hurried to the trying-place.

There they found Mr. Toospegs, looking green and sea-sick already, from anticipation. In a few words the gipsy gave him to understand that she wished to go on board immediately—a proposition which rather pleased Mr. Toospegs, who was inwardly afraid she might desire to be brought to his house, where she would be confronted by Miss Toospegs, of whom he stood in wholesome awe.

Half an hour brought them to the pier where

the vessel lay, and consigning little Raymond to the care of one of the female passengers, she sought her berth with Erminie. Until England was out of sight she still dreaded detection; and, therefore, she sat, with feverish impatience, longing to catch the last glimpse of the land wherein she was born. She watched every passing face with suspicion, and in every outstretched hand she saw some one about to snatch her prize from her; and involuntarily her teeth set, and she held the sleeping child in a fiercer clasp.

Once she caught a passing glimpse of Mr. Toospegs, a victim to "green and yellow melancholy" in its most aggravated form, as he walked toward his berth in an exceedingly limp state of mind and shirt-collar. Mr. Toospegs knew what sea-sickness was from experience; he had a distinct and sad recollection of what he endured the last time he crossed the Atlantic; and with many an ominous foreboding he ensconced himself in an arm-chair in the cabin, while the vessel rose and fell as she danced over the waves. Silently he sat, as men sit who await the heaviest blow Fate has in store for them. Suddenly a stentorian voice from the deck rose high above the creaking and straining of ropes, and tramping of feet, with the words, "Heave ahead." Mr. Toospegs gave a convulsive start, an expression of intense anguish passed over his face, and suddenly clapping his handkerchief to his mouth, he fled into the silent depths of the state-room, where, hidden from human view, what passed was never known.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated a tall, thin, sharp female, with a sour face, and a cantankerous expression of countenance generally, who sat with her hands folded over a shiny-brown Holland gown, as upright as a church-steeple and about as grim. "Well, I never! going hand being sea-sick before he's ten minutes on board, which is a something none of the family have 'ad before, hand I've been hover to Hiredland without ever thinking of such a thing; lying there on the broad hot back, leaving me a poor, lone woman, and groaning! hevery time this stratted hold ship gives a plunge, which is something that's not pleasant for a unprotected female to be, having a lot of hot disagreeable sailors, smelling of oakum and tar and sich, has hif he couldn't wait to be sea-sick before we'd land. Ugh!" And Miss Priscilla Dorothea Toospegs—for she it was—knit up her face in a bristle of the sourest knits, and punctuated her rather rambling speech by sandy frowns of the most intensely acid character.

To describe that voyage is not my intention; suffice it to say, that it was an unusually speedy one. On the following morning, the gipsy had appeared on deck with little Erminie, whose gentle beauty attracted universal attention, as her nurse's dark, stern, moody face did for her, and Keturah willingly gave her up, and consented to the request of a pleasant-faced young girl who offered to take charge of her until they should land. Master Raymond had already become prime favorite with all on board, more particularly with the sailors; and could soon run like a monkey up the shrouds into the rigging. At first he condescended to patronize Erminie occasionally; but on discovering she could not climb, he in fact, could not even stand on her feet properly—he began to look down on her with a sort of lofty contempt. On the fifth day, Mr. Toospegs made his appearance on deck, a walking skeleton. Everybody laughed at his woe-begone looks; and so deeply disgusted was Miss Priscilla by his sea-green visage, that it seemed doubtful whether she would ever acknowledge the relationship again.

As every one but Miss Priscilla laughed at him, and she scolded him unmercifully, the unhappy young man was forced to fly for relief to Keturah, whose silent greenness was quite delightful compared with the looks of the others. Feeling that she owed him something for his kindness, she listened in silence to all his doleful complaints; and this so won upon the susceptible heart of that unfortunate youth, that he contracted quite an affection for her—just as a lap-dog has been known to make friends with a tiger before now.

"What do you intend to do when you get to America, Mrs. Keturah," he asked one day as they sat together on the deck.

"I have not thought about it," she answered, indifferently.

"You'll have to do something, you know," insinuated Mr. Toospegs. "People always do something in America. They're real smart people there. I'm an American, Mrs. Keturah," added Mr. Toospegs, complacently.

A grim sort of smile, half contempt, half pity, passed over the face of the gipsy.

"Telling fortunes pays pretty well, I guess, but then it isn't a nice way to make a living; and besides that little baby would be real inconvenient to lug round with you, not to speak of that dreadful little boy who climbs up that tall, maitre d'hotel bowsprit—or whatever the nasty steep thing's name is. No, I don't think telling fortunes would be exactly the thing."

"I shall manage some way, don't bother me about it," said the gipsy, impatiently.

"What do you say to coming with us to Dismal Hollow? There's plenty of room around there for you; and I should be real glad to have you near, so that I could drop in to see you now and then."

Mr. Toospegs was sincere in saying he would like it this time; for her stern, fierce character had a strange sort of fascination for him, and he really was beginning to feel a strong attachment to her.

The real kindness of his tone, his simple generosity, touched even the granite heart of the hard gipsy queen. Lifting her eyes, that all this time had been moodily gazing into the dashing, foam-crested waves, she said, in a softer voice than he ever expected to hear from her lips:

"I thank you and accept your offer, and more for their sake, however, than my own"—pointing to the children. "I could make my way through the world easily enough, but they are young and tender, and need care. I will go with you."

She turned away as she ceased, as if there was no more to be said on the subject, and again looked fixedly down into the wide waste of waters.

"It's real good of you to say so, Mrs. Keturah, and I'm very much obliged to you," said Mr. Toospegs, with a brightening up of his pallid features. "We will land at New York, and after that, go to Dismal Hollow via Baltimore, which means, Mrs. Keturah," said Mr. Toospegs, interrupting himself, to throw in a word of explanation, "by way of. It's Latin, or Greek, I guess, though I never learned either. Ugh! ain't Latin nice, though!" added the owner of the sickly complexion, with a grimace of intense disgust.

"I tried it for six weeks, one time, with an apothecary; and then, as it began to throw me into a decline, I gave it up. Not any more. I'm very much obliged to you."

Three days after that the vessel touched the wharf at New York. And after two days'

delay, which Mr. Toospegs required to get his "land legs" on, they set off for Baltimore.

In due course of time that goodly city was reached, and one week after, the whole party arrived at Judestown—a thriving country town on the sea-coast, called then after the first settler, but known by another name, now.

Driving through the town, they reached the suburbs, and entered a more thinly-settled part of the country. Glimmering here and there through the trees, they could catch occasional glimpses of the bright waters of the Chesapeake, and hear the booming of the waves on the low shore.

Turning an abrupt angle in the road, they drove down a long, steep, craggy path, toward a gloomy mountain gorge, at sight of which Mr. Toospegs so far forgot himself as to take off his hat and wave it over his head, with a feeble "Hooray for Dismal Hollow" which so scandalized that strict Christian, his aunt, that she gave him a look beneath which he wilted down, and was heard no more.

"What an ugly old place! I won't go there!" exclaimed little Raymond, with a strong expression of contempt.

And truly it did not look very inviting. The mountain, which, by some convulsion of nature, seemed to have been violently rent in twain, was only passable by a narrow, dangerous bridge-path. Down in the very bottom of this deep, gloomy gorge, stood an old, time-worn, brick building, black, broken window shutters, that at some far-distant time might have been green. A range of dilapidated barns and outhouses spread away behind, and in front, some hundred yards distant, ran a slender rivulet, which every spring became swollen into a foaming torrent.

Here the sun never penetrated; no living creature was to be seen, and a more gloomy and dismal spot could hardly have been found in the wide world. Even the gipsy queen looked round with a sort of listless amazement, as one could be found to live here, while Miss Priscilla, elevated both hands in horror, and in the dismay of the moment was surprised into the profanity of exclaiming: "Great Jemini!"

"It's the ugliest old place ever was, and I won't go there!" reiterated Master Raymond, kicking viciously at Mr. Toospegs, to whom, with an inward presentiment, he felt he owed his coming.

"It is rather dull-looking now," said Mr. Toospegs, apologetically; "but wait till we get it fixed up a little, after a spell. The niggers have let things go to waste since I went away."

"Jumps! Should think they had!" said Miss Priscilla, with a diabolical sniff. "Nothing but trees, and rocks, and mountains to split him two; hand what your blessed father, which lies now a hangel in some nasty, swampy graveyard, could have been thinking about, with that 'orrid little river before the door, to build a 'ouse in such a spot, which must hoverful hevery time hit rains, his more than I can tell—drowning us in our beds, as it will be sure to do, some fine morning or hotter. Wah! wah!" And with this final expression of disgust, given in a tone of scorn no words can express, the ancient virgin suffered herself to be handed from the wagon by her dutiful nephew, and deposited in a mud-puddle before the door, to the great benefit of her stockings and temper.

The noise of wheels—a very unusual noise there—brought some half-score of lean, hungry-looking curs from some unseen region, who instantly began a furious yelping and barking. Miss Priscilla set up a series of short, sharp little screams, and jumped up on a rock in mortal terror; little Erminie, terrified by the noise, began to cry; Master Raymond yelled to the dogs at the top of his lungs, and plunged headforemost in among them. Mr. Toospegs went through all the phases of the potential mood—"extorting, exhorting, commanding"—and a general uproar ensued that would have shamed Babel.

The hubbub and din roused the inmates, at last, as it might very easily have done the Seven Sleepers themselves. A shuffling tread of feet was heard within, and then a trembling voice demanded:

"Who dar?"

"It's me. Open the door, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Mr. Toospegs, in an agony of supplication.

"We's got our arms, and dar ain't nothing in de house for you to rob, so you'd better go 'way," said a quavering voice, that evidently strove in vain to be courageous.

"Will you open the door? I tell you it's only me!" shouted the deeply-exasperated Mr. Toospegs, seizing the handle of the door and giving it a furious shake.

Cautiously the door was partly opened, a terrified voice was heard to whisper: "You hit dem wid de poker arter I fire," and then the frowning muzzles of two huge horse-pistols met their dismayed eyes.

"Don't shoot—it's me!" yelled the terrified Mr. Toospegs; but his words were lost in the bang! bang! of the pistols as they went off.

"Oh, Lord, have mercy on me! I'm shot!" shrieked the unhappy Mr. Toospegs, as he dropped like a stone in the mud, and lay motionless.

"Hand me de brunderingbuss—quick, Pomp! Dar's more o' dem," again whispered the catering voice; and once more the warlike individual within blazed away, while Miss Priscilla lay kicking in the strongest hysterics, and Mr. Toospegs, flat on his face in the mud, lay as rigid and still as a melancholy corpse.

So completely amazed was the gipsy queen by all this, that she stood motionless, with Erminie in her arms. Now the door was slowly opened, and a negro's face, gray with terror, was protruded. His round, goggle eyes, starting from his head with fear, fell on the prostrate forms of Miss Priscilla and her unfortunate nephew.

"Two ob dem gone, bress de Lord!" piously ejaculated Cuffee. "It takes me for to do de business. Well, bress Mars'! if I ain't had a fight for't." Then catching sight of the gipsy, he paused suddenly, and jumped back, and raised the discharged blunderbuss, but no effort could make it go off a second time.

"Are you mad, fellow?" exclaimed the deep, commanding voice of Keturah. "Would you murder your master?"

"Young mars' hab gone; an' of you don't cl'ar right out dar'll be more blood shed!" exclaimed the negro, still keeping his formidable weapon cocked.

"I tell you this is your master!" impatiently exclaimed Keturah. "He arrived to-day; and now you have shot him."

Slowly the blunderbuss was lowered, as if the conviction that she might be speaking the truth was slowly coming home to the mind of her hearer. Cautiously she left his post of danger and approached his prostrate foe. Gathering courage from his apparent lifelessness, he at last ventured to turn him over, and all smeared and clotted with mud, the pallid

features of Mr. Toospegs were upturned to the light. His arms were stretched stiffly out by his side, as much like a corpse as possible; his eyes were tightly closed; ditto his lips, all covered with soft mud.

There was no mistaking that face. With a loud howl of distress, the negro threw himself upon the lifeless form of poor Mr. Toospegs.

"Ah! You've got your elbow in the pit of my stomach!" exclaimed the corpse, with a sharp yell of pain. "Can't you get out of that, and let me die in peace?"

For the first time in two years, the gipsy, Keturah, laughed. In fact, they would have been more than mortal who could have beheld that unspeakably-ludicrous scene without doing so.

Miss Priscilla stopped her hysterical kicking and plunging, and raised herself on her elbow to look.

The negro, with a whoop of joy that might have startled a Shawnee Indian, seized Mr. Toospegs, who had shut his eyes and composed himself for death again, save an occasional splutter as the mud went down his throat, and swinging him over his shoulder as if he had been a limp towel, rushed with him in triumph into the house.

"He warn't dead, then, hafter hall!" said Miss Priscilla, sharply, in a voice that seemed made of steel-springs. "Well, I never! Going hand fright'ning respectable parties bout their wits with 'orrid black niggers, firing hof of pistols hand cannons; lying there in the mud making believe dead; hand shooting me some-where-for I can feel the balls hinside hof me; spilling a good new suit hof clothes, rolling there like a pig, and not dead hafter hall; hand that there nigger shooting away like mad hall the time, which his a mercy to be thankful for! Wah! wah!"

And, with her usual look of sour disgust immeasurably heightened, Miss Priscilla gathered up her own muddy skirts and marched, like a loaded rifle all ready to go off, into a long, black, chill, littered hall.

Half a dozen frightened darkies were crouching in the further corner, and on these Miss Priscilla turned the muzzle of the rifle, and a sharp volley of oddly-jumbled up sentences went off in tones of keenest irony.

"Yes, you may stand there, you huffy black leeches, hafter shooting us hevery one; though looks ain't hof no consequence in this 'orrid place; hand hif you don't get 'ung for it some day, my name hain't Priscilla Dorothea Toospegs! Perhaps you'll show me where my neevy his, which you've shot so nicely, hand make a fire, hafter keeping his rolling hin the mud, getting his death hof cold in this 'orrid cold 'ouse, which being a respectable female, hand not a pig, I hain't used to; hand Hamer-ing hand hain't the nicest thing I ever saw for to go so; maybe you'll get his some dinner, hand show me to where my neevy his, hif you please," concluded Miss Priscilla, in tones of most cutting irony.

The terrified servants understood enough of this singular address to know Miss Toospegs wished for a fire, her dinner, and her nephew. An old woman, therefore, in a gaudy Madras turban, advanced, and led the way up a rickety flight of stairs into a comfortable-looking room, with a damp, unwarmed floor, where, on a bed, lay the mortal remains of O. C. Toospegs, with the darkey—whose name I may as well say at once was Cupid—giving him a most vigorous rubbing, which extorted from the dead man sundry groans and grimaces, and encouraged Cupid to still further exertions.

The loaded rifle advanced to the bedside, and a second volley went off.

"Come, Horlander Toospegs, get hup hout o' that, lying there in this musty hold room, face and hall plastered hover with mud, which his enough to give you the rheumatism the longest day you live, without the first spark hof a fire—so it is!"

"I'm dying, Aunt Priscilla; stay with me to the last!" in the faintest whisper, responded Mr. Toospegs, languidly opening his eyes, and then shutting them again.

"Dying? Wah, wah!" shouted Miss Priscilla, catching him by the shoulder and shaking him with no gentle hand. "Pretty corpse you'll make, hall hover with mud, hand looks has much like dying has I do."

"De brunderingbuss an' de pistols war only loaded wid powder—no shot in 'em at all! 'Deed, old missus, he ain't hurted the fastest mile, only he 'inks so."

"Hold!" shrieked Miss Priscilla, turning fiercely upon Cupid. "You impudent black nigger, you to call me hold! Leave the room this very minute, hand never let me see your huffy, black face hafter again!"

"Come—you are not hurt—get up!" said Keturah, going over to the bedside, as poor Cupid, crestfallen, slunk away. "There is not a hair of your head injured. Up with you!"

"Am I not shot?" demanded Mr. Toospegs, bewildered. "Did the bullet not enter my brain?"

"You never had any for it to enter," said the gipsy, encouragingly. "Look yourself; there is neither wound nor blood."

"No; but it's bleeding inwardly," said Mr. Toospegs, with a hollow groan. "Oh, I know I'm dead man!"

"Chut! I have no patience with you! Get up, man! you are as well as ever!" impatiently exclaimed Keturah.

Slowly, Mr. Toospegs, who had immense faith in Keturah, lifted first one arm and then another, to see if either were powerless. Satisfied on this point, he next lifted each leg; and finding, to his great astonishment, that his limbs were all sound, he carefully began to raise himself up in bed. No torrent of blood followed this desperate attempt, as he expected there would be; and the next minute, Mr. Orlander Toospegs stood, safe and sound, on the floor, looking about as sheepish a young gentleman as you would find from Maine to Florida.

"You thought you was gone—didn't you?" said the little witch, Raymond, with a malicious chuckle of delight, as he watched the chop-fallen hero of the pallid features.

Miss Toospegs merely contented herself with a look of lofty contempt more withering than words, and then rustled out to rouse up the "huffy black leeches" on the subject of dinners and fires.

Having succeeded in both objects, especially in the dinner department, which Aunt Bob, the presiding deity of the kitchen, had got up in sublime style, Miss Priscilla was in somewhat better humor; and having announced her intention of beginning a thorough reformation both out doors and in, turned briskly to her nephew, who sat in a very dejected state of mind, without so much as a word to say for himself, and exclaimed:

"Now, Horlander, the best thing you can do is, to go immediately hand see haout getting a 'ouse for Mrs. Keturah hand the children, which would never survive a day in this damp hold barn; besides, being to do some time or hotter, it may has well be did first has last, hand save the 'spence hof a doctor's bill, which his the huppleasentest thing hever was stuck hin hanybody's face."

Mr. Toospegs, who felt he would never more dare to call his soul his own, meekly put on his hat, and said he would go and see about a cottage he knew of which would suit Mrs. Keturah to a T. The fact was, he was glad to escape from his aunt; and that good lady, who had classed Mrs. Keturah and the children under the somewhat indefinite title of "riff raff" from the first, was equally anxious to be rid of them.

Late that evening, Mr. Toospegs returned, with the satisfactory news that he had obtained the cottage, which belonged, he informed them, to a certain Admiral Havenful, who, not having any particular use for it himself, said they might have it, rent free. The cottage was furnished, just as it had been left by its last tenant; and Mrs. Keturah might pitch her tent there, with a safe conscience, as fast as she liked.

"You had better take one of the servants with you, too," said Mr. Toospegs, good-naturedly; "we have more than we want, and you will require one to mind the baby, and fetch water, and do chores. I think Lucy will do as well as any."

Miss Toospegs frowned at first; but remembering, upon second thoughts, that there was already a tribe of useless negroes and dogs, eating them out of house and home, she gave a sharp assent, at last, to her nephew's arrangement.

Early the next morning, Mr. Toospegs, Keturah, Raymond, Erminie, and the negroes, Lucy, entered the wagon, and turned their backs upon Dismal Hollow.

Half an hour's drive through a forest-road, all aglow with the leafy splendor of early July, brought them to the sea-shore. Far removed from any other habitation, stood a pretty little white-washed cottage, a little fairy-bandbox of a place, on a bank above the sea, nestling like a pearl set in emeralds, and gleamed through a wilderness of vines and shrubs. A wide, dry, arid expanse, overrun with blueberry and cranberry vines, spread before the door toward the north, as far as the eye could reach. Far in the distance, they could see a huge house, of a dazzling whiteness, unshaded by tree or vine, as it stood in the full glare of the hot sun, dazzling the eye of the gazer. This, Mr. Toospegs gave them to understand, was the "White Squall," the residence of Admiral Havenful; and the dry plains spreading into the distance were very appropriately known as the "Barrens." South and east, a dense forest shut in the view, and to the west spread out the boundless sea.

"Now, Mrs. Keturah," said Mr. Toospegs, in a mysterious whisper, "you can't live upon green vines and blueberries, nor yet you can't stay in this cottage from morning till night, you know, though I dare say Aunt Priscilla thinks you can. Therefore you must take this purse—half of which the admiral gave me for you last night, and the other half—well, no matter. Then, as you'll want to go to Judestown to market, and to church, sometimes, I'll send over the pony and the old buggy; but don't you say a word about it to Aunt Priscilla—women don't need to know anything, you know, as they don't always view things in their proper light; and Aunt Priscilla's queer any way. If there's anything else you want, just you send Lucy for it to Dismal Hollow, and you shall have it, Mrs. Keturah, for I like you real well."

"You are very kind," said the gipsy, again touched by his good-nature; "and I hope you will always regard yourself as one of the family."

"Thank you, Mrs. Keturah," said Mr. Toospegs, in a tone of delight. "I certainly will, since you wish it. I'll drop in very often. I'm very much obliged to you."

And, waving his hand briskly, Mr. Toospegs resumed his seat in the wagon, and drove off again to Dismal Hollow.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 290.)

Love in a Maze:

OR,
THE DEBUTANTE'S DISENCHANTMENT.

BY MRS. E. F. ELLET.

AUTHOR OF "ALIDA BARRETT, THE SEWING-GIRL," "MADELINE'S MARRIAGE," ETC.

CHAPTER XV.

CAVED AGAIN.

THE train stopped at Jersey City. Elodie, rested and refreshed, was lifted from the place she had occupied in the express car, and took Catherine's arm to walk to the ferryboat, after profuse thanks and payment to the man who had furnished the accommodation.

Catherine proposed taking her to a hotel in Jersey City for the night; but the young lady objected. She would rest on the other side. Thus she lost the protection of the express-agent, and, without knowing it, ran headlong into the jaws of danger.

Rashleigh's quick eyes scanned the passengers as they alighted from the several cars. He did not see among them those he sought, and was beginning to fear he had been misled, when he caught sight of two female figures helped out of a freight-car ahead of those for passengers. He came close to them, and at once recognized both, notwithstanding the disguise of veil and hood.

He was near enough to hear Elodie say she preferred going over to New York, and would rest there. He stepped back out of view, and followed them as they went on board the boat. When they reached the other side and landed, Elodie stood a few moments with her companion outside the ferry-house, deliberating where they would direct their steps. The Merchants' Hotel was known to Catherine as a respectable place, and thither they decided to go for the night.

"I have no money left," said Elodie; "but there is my ring. I can leave it in pledge, and Mr. Blount will send for it when he pays the bill. Can we walk? How far is it, Catherine?"

"Only half a block, Miss. If you will lean on me! Step here across the street, Miss."

They gained the other side of the street. Suddenly a man rushed up to them, tore Elodie from Catherine's hold, threw a cloak over her head, and catching her in his arms, bore her swiftly to a carriage he had signaled to stand in waiting.

The Irishwoman's first impulse was to use her strong arms to snatch his prey from the ruffian, and she did not scream. She rushed after Rashleigh, and seized him by the skirt of his coat, with an outcry of Hibernian expressions of indignant amazement.

Rashleigh thrust Elodie into the vehicle, where she fell in a heap, stunned and unable to utter a sound, and then flung off the woman who had laid hold of him. He did this with such violence, that she fell with force upon the paving-stones, holding in her hands the piece of coat

till a policeman, who just then saw a woman lying on the ground, and took her for a drunkard, came and touched her with his staff, ordering her to get up and go on.

The poor woman obeyed with an alacrity that showed her to be no drunkard. Clapping her hands to her head, to see if the bruise she had received had not knocked it off, she broke into shrieks and wild entreaties for help, to catch the villain who had knocked her down and carried off her young mistress.

But the carriage was out of sight long before she could explain the matter to the policeman. Different counsels were given by several individuals whom the noise of the "row" had gathered together, and poor Catherine, unable to decide on what to do, was fain to betake herself to the house of one of her acquaintances, where she bemoaned the outrage and her loss amid sympathizing exclamations.

Rashleigh lifted Elodie upon the seat of the carriage and removed the cloak from her head. He thought she had fainted; when he found her in possession of her senses, he closed the window; but neither of them spoke a word till the carriage stopped.

It had drawn up—according to instructions—in a lonesome side street near the East river, before a small two and a half story house of dingy brick, in one of the lower windows of which was a milliner's sign. The mistress of the establishment plied a small trade in bonnets, and kept a lodging-house for laboring men engaged on the wharves. She was an old crony of Rashleigh's, and the sister of his first wife.

He stepped out of the vehicle and told Elodie to follow him, assisting her as she obeyed. The door was opened even before he could ring the bell; he having stopped an instant to pay the driver. An elderly woman stood, holding the door partly open, and peering at the newcomers.

Rashleigh whispered to her, and with a nod, she took the young girl's hand and led her up the narrow, dirty stairs partly covered with rag-carpeting. A lamp was burning on the landing; this she took up, and opened the door of a room looking to the back of the house by a single window. Elodie gazed helplessly in her face as she suffered herself to be led in. Was there a gleam of human kindness to which she could appeal?

The woman was over fifty years old, and had a most forbidding countenance. Her face was gaunt, wrinkled and sallow. The small, sunken gray eyes had an expression of malignant ferocity blended with greed, that froze the very soul of the unhappy girl. Her sinewy frame, betokened strength the captive's girlish struggles could never overcome. She saw at a glance that she could hope for nothing from the woman's pity, and sunk with a moan on the low chair placed for her.

The woman asked if she would have supper. The poor girl declined to eat anything. Then her jailer set down the lamp, making a muttered apology for the absence of a fire, as she "had not expected company," and withdrew, locking the door behind her.

Elodie lifted her head to take a brief survey of her prison-cell. It was narrow and close, and a suffocating smell pervaded it. The walls were dingy and begrimed with dust. There were no curtains to the window, but slaking and half-broken blinds excluded the light when it was daylight. The panes were dusty and cracked, but not broken. The bed was a straw mattress, covered with a dirty wadded-calico coverlet; the sheets and pillow-cases were yellow and stained. The aspect of things was dismal beyond imagination; and the courage of the hapless prisoner sunk as she looked on her surroundings.

She had exchanged comparative comfort for the horrors of the vilest den she had ever seen; the society of a woman of culture who might have been won to pity and save her, for the tyranny of a bold and cruel spirit locked out in every hideous feature. What was to become of her? More than ever she was in the power of her persecutor. Would she perform fall a victim to his diabolical plot?

In an agony she clasped her hands over her forehead, to still the throbbing of her burning brain. She feared she would go mad. A passionate longing for death took possession of her.

Then a better feeling stole over her, as if she heard the whisper of an angel. It prompted her to prayer, in unshaken trust that One lived and reigned whose ears were always open to the cry of the desolate.

Slowly she slid down from the chair to her knees, bowing her head on her folded hands. She prayed fervently; and with the prayer came a sense of security she felt sure was inspired in answer to it. The pressure on her brain was loosened, and she wept; wept abundantly.

When she rose, her self-possession had returned. A calm was on her rebellious spirit, and hope sprung to life again. She would not yield to the abandonment of despair. A way of escape would be opened; God would save her from her cruel enemies. On one thing she determined: to be watchful for an opportunity, and if possible, not to eat or drink what might contain drugs to deprive her of reason.

The key turned in the lock, the door opened, and Rashleigh came in, carrying some stout boards and a hammer and nails. He set these down, locked the door again, picked up the lamp till it gave a better light, and then took the other chair.

He began by an apology for the severity to which his "niece's" obstinacy had driven him. He had no wish to be harsh with her; he regretted the necessity of bringing her to such a place; but she need stay no longer than she chose; she must know that.

"You mean," said the girl, calmly, "that you will release me when I have submitted to your terms?"

"That is exactly," was the response, with an affirmative nod.

A pause ensued.

"Mr. Rashleigh," Elodie resumed, almost surprised herself at her coolness and self-possession, "I know that it would be of no use to appeal to your pity, or kindness."

"I am glad you are so rational," he began, interrupting her. She went on:

"Would you set me free, if I were to sign over to you, or your son, all my right and title to the property which you know belongs to me?"

"Certainly not, my dear; for such a transfer you have no right to make. You are not of age. Those who hold the money would laugh at me."

"But if I will give you a written promise—sworn to, if you like—to pay the whole over to you as soon as I come of age?"

"I won't do. No such promise would be binding on you, either legally or morally. 'Durees' you know, nullifies any pledge. Then I would have to wait four years before your majority."

"But my guardian!—if I write to him, he will secure you." And Elodie looked at him.

"He would be more likely to set the police on me, and have me sent to the State prison."

No, no, my pretty singing-bird; I've been at no little trouble to cage you; and I don't mean to let you go till I have accomplished the project I have long cherished. My services as your traveling-agent were only the preparation for that."

"For what?"

"A marriage between you and my son."

The girl shuddered from head to foot.

"I grant you he is not a brigand to be coveted. Nature has been a niggard to him. But the advantages will not be entirely on his side. He is a cripple as well as defective in intellect. He will be no jealous tyrant, like some husbands I could name. Much of his time may have to be passed in the hospital. You will have unbounded freedom: can come and go as you will. When your claims and his are united, there will be no further opposition to the immediate transfer of the property; and I am the proper custodian, as the nearest relative and natural guardian of both of you."

Elodie turned away her face. She did not wish her enemy to see the expression of disgust and horror she could not repress.

"Come, child; do not be obstinate. Only yield in this, and you may command me in everything else. There is nothing you can ask which I would not do for you. Consent to obey me, and to-morrow you shall go to one of the first hotels in the city, till your own house is ready, or till you go abroad, if you choose rather to do so. Come, Elodie, trust me."

She shrunk from his outstretched hand.

"Mr. Rashleigh, I will never do what you propose. No power on earth can force me to marry your son!"

"You may think better of this!" retorted her captor, gloomily.

"Never! I will die first!"

He glared at her with a terrible meaning in his eyes; but she met his gaze with proud firmness. Then he rose and taking the lamp, with the table on which it stood, to the window, he busied himself with fastening open the blinds, throwing up the sash to get at them.

The cool air refreshed the captive. She asked him timidly, if he would not leave the sash open, as the close and fetid atmosphere oppressed her, dreadfully.

"I do not care if I do," he replied. "I don't want you, child, to suffer any more than is necessary. You will find it impossible to get out or look out through the planks I shall nail up; and all the air and light you want will come through these cracks."

He went on with the work of nailing inside of the blinds thick planks, with an interval of half an inch between the upper ones, for the admission of air and light.

When the planks were fastened by driving in huge nails, they formed an impenetrable barrier. No strength of a frail girl could move them.

Rashleigh drew a breath of satisfaction as he seated himself.

"That will do nicely," he observed. "You can not move one of those planks. You are a prisoner, as safe as you would be in the Tombs, till you agree to my wishes. You had better be reasonable, girl. Liberty and a life of luxury are yours on one simple condition."

"I will not have them on such terms," replied Elodie, resolutely.

"You will not even be compelled to live with your husband, if you prefer not. His state of health will be sufficient excuse."

The determination in the girl's face did not relax.

"You will be tired of this in a few days," said her captor. "It is a dismal hole for a young lady brought up so daintily! You will not go out, nor communicate with any one. Your meals—hard fare—will be brought by the woman you saw; and she is a near relation—any scold and deeply interested in his good fortune, because she will share in it."

"I shall be starved," wailed the prisoner, "for I will not eat food you may have poisoned."

"Give yourself no uneasiness on that score, girl," said the villain. "You need not fear that either food or drink will be drugged."

"You would have done it this very night."

"I own it; that was my first scheme; but it won't do now. You could prove the attempt by that jade Catherine; and the marriage would be set aside. No—I must have no hitch of that sort. Your full and free consent must be given, and that we shall have, before many days of this den and solitary imprisonment."

"Better life-long imprisonment—better death—than such a fate!" murmured Elodie.

"Take care, girl, how you provoke me," growled her persecutor. "Your death would be as much of a windfall to me as the marriage I mentioned."

"And better for me," she sighed, despairingly.

"If you are obstinate"—with a fierce oath—"I wouldn't mind—" His wolfish glare supplied his horrible meaning.

"You will kill me, then?" cried Elodie.

"You dare not! You would be afraid!"

"Who knows you are here? What is to prevent my putting you out of my way, if I choose?"

"God will save me from your power, cruel, wicked man!" sobbed the girl.

"I doubt it. I see no chance for you, but to submit, or perish in your obstinacy. It will come to one or the other; and that very soon. But you shall not be starved or poisoned. You will have supper sent up directly. I'll bid you good-night, now. Whenever you make up your mind to be sensible, tell Mrs. Hazel—that is your landlady's name—and she will send word to me. But remember, you never leave this room till you leave it as my daughter—or a corpse!"

He took up the hammer and nails, drew the key from his pocket, unlocked the door and locked it again, and descended the stairs.

Half an hour afterward a plate of cold chicken, bread and rancid butter, was put inside the door, with a glass of beer. Elodie was anxious to keep up her strength and forced herself to eat a little; then threw her shawl over the bed, drew her cloak over her, and sunk into exhausted slumbers.

CHAPTER XVI.
SAVED FROM THE FIRE.

MR. THOMAS WYATT received an early call on the day following the occurrences related in a former chapter. It was from a Southern gentleman; a stranger, who presented a letter.

Tom was hardly astonished to find it was a challenge from General Marsh. The bearer, his friend, was commissioned to make all arrangements as to time, place and weapons.

In addition to an excellent heart, young Wyatt possessed strong common sense, and pride of the right sort enough to prevent a false sense of shame from interfering with his duty. He made a frank confession of his error, fully exonerating the lady from the least shadow of blame, and taking it all to himself.

"I'll perish before suffering any scandal to get about to her injury!" he ejaculated, with earnestness. "General Marsh must have heard her words as well as mine; and he knows her truth and goodness."

"He does," replied Colonel Beauchamp, the friend selected to conduct the affair. "He acknowledges it freely, and is full of self-reproach for his previous harsh judgment. But he does not choose that any man shall live to say he insulted his wife with impunity."

"I deserve to be shot," cried Tom, "but I will not stand up to fight with your friend!"

An exclamation of contemptuous incredulity passed over the colonel's face.

"I understand you, sir. You Southerners imagine that we who live north of the Potomac would rather make our quarrels a police affair than take the chances of getting our deserts. You mistake me; I am no coward. I am willing the General shall shoot me down the first time he meets me, and I will leave my affidavit that I deserve it. But I will not fight him because I tried to injure him."

"He demands the reparation at your hands."

"I have been a dead shot from boyhood and should be likely to hit my mark. I would not fire at him and he would not like to take aim at me, knowing that he ran no risk. The law would make it murder."

"If you are a man of honor, sir—"

"I am not, at least in this affair. I behaved like a scamp. The General might kill me, if he would, and I should have no right to object. If you will convey to the lady my humble apology, I shall be obliged to you beyond expression. I am not worthy to speak to her."

"If you are willing to make the apology to her husband, sir, I think he would be satisfied to go no further."

"You may say as much from me."

"ardon me, but I want the apology in writing."

"As you please."

Tom drew a small escutcheon on the table toward him, opened it, and took out writing papers.

"I will do you the justice, sir," remarked Colonel Beauchamp, "to say that I believe you sincerely repentant for your fault; not actuated by any fear of consequences."

Tom dipped his pen, and dashed off his note without heeding these words; he cared not, indeed, for any opinion formed or expressed of his conduct. His own self-respect was all he valued; and that could only be restored by voluntary humiliation and atonement.

The bearer of the challenge read over the note placed in his hands, and declared his conviction that his principal would find it satisfactory.

"Though I would have been torn by wild horses before I would have so humbled myself," he muttered, "unless I had just before mortally wounded my adversary."

"You would be afraid of having mean motives imputed to you; and would risk your life, or take another's, to keep up your reputation for bravery!"

"That is it."

"Who is the coward, then?"

The Southerner could not answer. He had received a lesson; a new one in the code of honor he had learned from boyhood. As he took his leave, he thought young Wyatt a man of true dignity, and resolved to seek his acquaintance.

But he had no opportunity. Tom waited till two or three days had passed, and there was no probability of hearing any more from the General. Then—having had his baggage in readiness some time—he took the train for the West. His friends heard the best accounts of his success and his welfare during a year or two afterward.

"How far the little candle throws its beam! So shines a good deed in a naughty world," said the greatest poet who ever lived.

And the frank self-condemnation of the conscience-stricken Tom, faithfully represented by Colonel Beauchamp, had its salutary effect upon General Marsh. It was like death to him to acknowledge himself in the wrong; but he did not hesitate when convinced that he had done so.

The same evening he admitted himself, by his latch-key, into his own house. There was no servant about, and he went quietly into the library. Olive Weston had just taken a book from one of the alcoves, and was bringing it to the light, to examine it.

She saw the General, and the book fell from her hand. Before he could say a word, she fled from the room and up the stairs like a frightened fawn.

The master of the house felt his courage ebbing, in his consciousness that he had deserved to be shunned like this. If the guest so feared his presence, how would it be with the wife to whom he had caused such sorrow needlessly?

There was a rustle of silken drapery on the stairs; the patter of impetuous feet; and the next instant a pair of tender arms were flung around his neck.

"Arthur! Arthur! I have you at last! You shall not escape me again!"

"Ruhama! my true and noble wife! Can you forgive me?"

The arms clasped him more closely; the soft cheek, now wet with tears, was pressed to his voice murmured, "Arthur! my husband!" and could utter no more.

The General did not spare himself. His besetting sin—jealousy cruel as the grave—was brought forth in confession—shamed—and slain before the wife's eyes. Never, never would it again be indulged. It had caused him the tortures of a lost soul; it had brought him to the verge of suicide; but he was freed from its curse forever.

"The chain fell from me," he protested, "when I heard my wronged wife, even in the bitterness of my cruel desertion, say that she loved me!"

"You heard that?" questioned the happy wife. "And was it news to you?"

"I had never dared believe, till then, that I really possessed your love, dearest."

"Then it was a happy mistake—your jealousy—that led you into knowledge of the truth! I am glad you misunderstood me for a while, since the result has cured you, Arthur!"

When mutual explanations were ended, Ruhama called Olive down, and the well-pleased three sat down to a dainty supper together. Visitors came to the door, but the porter was ordered to admit no one.

They were a merry party; and even Olive suppressed her sighs as she witnessed a happiness she never dreamed would fall to her own lot.

One morning Olive descended the stairs, dressed to accompany Ruhama in a drive. She had scarcely joined her, when a letter was brought in on a salver for Miss Weston; the messenger waiting for an answer.

It was from Wyndham Blount—a hurried note—entreating her presence at his mother's house as soon as possible.

Leona, disappointed of her promised share in Rashleigh's spoil, and indignant at his treatment now that she was of no further use to him—especially his contemptuous repudiation of her claims—had taken revenge by informing Elodie's guardian, Mr. Blount, of her flight and probable abduction, and the nefarious plans of her so-called uncle. Bent on taking immediate steps for her rescue, Mr. Blount wanted the assistance of Miss Weston to go and bring her to his mother's as soon as she could be found. He had lost no time in putting a warrant for Rashleigh's arrest in the hands of a detective.

Olive resolved to obey the summons; and told the messenger to say she would be at Mrs. Blount's almost immediately. She begged Mrs. Marsh to excuse her, and was setting out to walk, when Ruhama insisted on driving her to her destination. If the girl were found, she should be brought at once to her house, as the most fitting asylum for her.

More news, meanwhile, had come to Mr. Blount. Catherine, who happened to remember her address—Elodie having told her on their way from the salt marsh, bidding her go to him in case of accident or her illness—came with a piteous complaint against the villain who had knocked her down at the ferry, and carried away the young girl.

Another detective was employed to look after the young man at the Hospital for Imbeciles, it being thought probable that Rashleigh would attempt at once to carry out his plans, and force the girl into a marriage with his son.

Both Ruhama and Olive listened with deep and fearful sympathy to the warm-hearted Irishwoman's story. She received a triple fee in acknowledgment of her help to the desolate fugitive, and Mrs. Marsh undertook to find her a suitable place.

The friends of the abducted girl had a consultation, and agreed on a plan of action, as soon as a clue could be obtained to the place where the captive had been conveyed. It was ascertained that she was not at Mrs. Blount's house, nor did that worthy dame know anything concerning her. She had been anxious a long time—her letter having been unanswered; and her lamentations were voluble that the girl had ever been deluded into trusting such a villain as Rashleigh.

"If she had only been willing to stay with me!" had been her exclamation. "It would not have been so bad a thing if she had married poor Enrico, after all!"

Wyndham did not echo the sentiment.

As nothing could be done till the clue sought could be obtained, Ruhama said she would remain, awaiting a message, which she would obey on the instant. It was agreed what should be done, the moment there should be any discovery.

While they were speaking together, the ladies having risen to depart, a lad about sixteen years old entered the parlor, and stood waiting. He was employed in Blount's office as messenger and errand-boy, and frequently brought him papers, as he did on the present occasion; for he had a metallic case full of them in his hand.

Wyndham took the papers from the messenger, while the two ladies were having a few last words with his mother. As Ruhama turned to go out, she saw that Olive had gone across the room to the young messenger, and was examining the box he held, and out of which Wyndham had taken the papers.

"Come, Olive, dear; are you ready?"

"Oh, Ruhama, see here! The name on this box: 'Hall & Reynolds'—and under that the name of Stanley—half effaced! It is exactly like the box Mr. Reynolds had in the courtroom!"

"What of that? All lawyers' boxes are alike."

"No, Mrs. Marsh; this is an oddity, not an ordinary deed-box. This is of a peculiar shape," observed Mrs. Blount.

"Where did you get this box?" demanded Olive, her face crimson, her eyes fastened eagerly on the lad.

"Please, Miss, I saved it from the fire," was his modest reply.

"What fire?"

"The fire that burnt the — building in Pine street, a long time ago."

"The office of Hall & Reynolds was burnt then?" questioned the girl, pointing to the names on the box.

"I believe so, Miss. There were many offices burnt," replied the boy.

"You are right; Hall & Reynolds suffered among the rest," said Wyndham. "This box must have belonged to them."

"And it must have contained property or papers of Mrs. Stanley's!" gasped Olive, breathless with excitement.

"Yes, Miss, it had papers in it. I picked it up out of the ruins, and nothing in it was burnt; nothing at all."

"The papers—whatever was in it—what did you with them?"

"You should have returned them to the owner, Martin," said Wyndham, reprovingly.

"What have you done with them?" repeated Olive.

The boy looked down, abashed.

"Why, Miss, I did not know they were worth anything. They were not deeds, nor mortgages, nor anything worth money. Only old drafts of law papers, and much like."

"Then you destroyed them!" asked Olive, growing pale.

"No, Miss, they are all safe. My mother took them and put them away in a drawer."

"You must return them at once. Bring them to this lady," said Wyndham.

"No, Mr. Blount, I will go for them; I cannot bear the suspense. Oh, Ruhama! I heard Mr. Reynolds say Mrs. Stanley's will had been destroyed in that fire! If it should have been saved in this box!"

Olive insisted upon going with the boy at once to his mother's house. Ruhama said, if she would go, she would accompany her in the carriage, and the lad, whom Mr. Blount readily excused from his office duty, might have a seat on the box. The friends then separated.

It was a long drive to a remote part of the city; a neat-looking tenement-house in Ninth avenue. The rooms of the woman they wished to see were on the third floor. Olive followed the boy up at once, and her friend came more slowly.

A middle-aged woman, dressed in black cashmere, with a collar of snowy whiteness fastened by a jet brooch, was busy at a sewing-machine. She rose, evidently taking the ladies for customers, and placed chairs for them. She was used to being visited by ladies who wanted sewing done; her occupation being that of seamstress.

The lad, her son, went close to her, and said something in a low tone. She looked puzzled for a minute, then nodded her head, smiled, and went to a bureau at one end of the room. Olive's eyes followed her with burning eagerness, though she forced herself to sit still.

The woman unlocked the lowest drawer, lifted some articles of dress neatly folded in

napkins and scented with lavender, and took out a bundle of papers.

"I kept them," she remarked, "though I did not know as they would ever be asked for, or be of any use. Martin said nobody advertised for papers."

Olive, unable to control her impatience, ran to her, and took the papers. One was a large document in an envelope.

The girl seemed hardly able to examine the prize when it was in her hand. She was pale from excess of emotion.

"Be calm, dear friend!" whispered Ruhama. "Shall I take them for you? Let me look! What is this?"

She drew out the large paper; it was labeled "Last Will and Testament of Mrs. Maude Stanley, etc."

Ruhama thought the girl beside her was fainting, and put her arms around her.

"I knew it would be this!" she breathed faintly, and almost suffocated with the intensity of her feelings. "It is a miracle!"

Mrs. Marsh explained to the good woman that a valuable paper had been recovered, supposed to have been destroyed in the fire; and offered a liberal reward for her care in preserving it, adding, that no doubt the lawyers would pay munificently.

But the woman declined receiving anything. She was afraid she had done wrong in not sending the papers at once to their owners; but really, she would not have known where to have found the gentlemen.

Her son added that he had seen the death of Mr. Hall in the newspapers, a short time afterward, and had supposed the firm had broken up. As to a will, it was so easy to make another, etc.

The excuses were received kindly, and the visitors took leave.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 281.)

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THAT MORNING GONG.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

So you want to know, Judge,
The cause of this here riot?
Well, I kin draw to this hotel
In a arch of a little quiet,
For to be upset by noises and sich
Ruther affects my diet, Judge.

I hung out in a room last night
And I went to sleep like a sinner,
And I paid for the snoring I done—
And also for breakfast and dinner,
And I felt as independent-like
As any trampin' tinner.

So this morning I was awakened
In a very uncommon fashion,
For out in the hall there, Judge,
I heard a terrible crashing,
As if the house had gone down
And everything else was smashing.

I rose and put on my other boot
And opened the door quite wary—
Although in a general way, Judge,
I'm not the man to be scary,
And my head I protruded into the hall
Which, just at that time, was airy.

And what should I see at the other end
But a little crowd of a nigger
From Afric's sunny fountains, Judge,
Cuttin' a monstrous figger,
Clubbin' away at an old tin pan
As if he was in liquor.

He banged away with all his might,
Making most monstrous faces,
He pounded it perfectly out of shape,
Then pounded it round upon the traces,
Till I thought that all tin-pandemonium
Had broken loose from the traces.

He spit on his hand and beat away
As if the dickens was in it;
He rolled up his sleeve and hammered it
Till I thought it would beat every minute;
Then he'd stop the noise to catch his breath,
And lavigate his teeth.

He battered it against the wall
As if to knock down the partition,
He struck it with a club till it clashed
Just like a railroad collision;
He slashed it around upon the floor
And stamped on it like perdition.

I ventured out, and sez I, "Young man,
I'm opposed to this here doin',
It's not satisfactory to we—uns
Even if it is to you—uns,
And if I have to hit you a spot
You'll not be found in the ruins."

He banged away as he winked his eye;
My words he did ignore 'em,
And all the answer that I got
Was "Yi, yi, Hunkidoreem!"
Then I smashed that thingum-bob over his
head.

And scattered him over the floorum.
So you can figger up my fine
For I've got the money to pay it,
I'm one of those individuals, Judge,
Who's very firm in his opinion,
And I'll have it around where I reside
If I have to raise a riot.

The Condor's Manifest.

BY T. C. HARBROUGH.

It was eight o'clock at night, and Mark Compton, the confidential clerk of Gaffey & Co., Commission Merchants, found himself alone in the counting-room of the firm. He felt comfortable, with his feet so near the grate, and listened to the howling November winds with a smile. The firm had retired to cosy parlors far removed from the business quarters of the river city, and the key had been turned in the front door by the clerk. He had received instructions concerning certain correspondence which had to be ready for the morning mail, hence his presence in the counting-room at the hour we have named.

With his accustomed promptitude the letters had been written, and, for rest and recreation, the clerk had flung himself into an easy office chair. His presence was not demanded anywhere, and he did not feel like deserting a comfortable fire for the wind-swept streets.

"The Condor is coming up," he said in an audible tone to himself; "and, by my lady's love! I forgot to look at her manifest this morning."

A daily journal was within reach, and the next moment the confidential clerk was running his eye down the column of river news. Gaffey & Co. were the largest commission dealers in the city, and almost daily received consignments from the South. These consignments brought work to Mark Compton, and therefore the river column always elicited his especial attention.

On the particular night with which we deal, the "manifest" of the Southern boats soon greeted the clerk's eye, and it was while running over it that he almost started from his chair.

"There must be a mistake somewhere," he exclaimed, with his eye still riveted on the page before him. "Who could be sending such an object to me from the South—where? There surely must be another Mark Compton in the city!"

With the paper in his hand, the clerk rose and opened the ponderous "Directory" on the desk. A moment later he was running his finger down the list of Comptons, speaking audibly after this manner:

"Compton, O. C.; Compton, Nathan; Compton, Mary; Martin, Maxwell P. The mischief take it! I'm the only Mark Compton in the book!"

He closed the volume greatly perplexed, and looked at the paper again.

"By George! I'm going to claim that portion of the Condor's manifest marked to Mark Compton!" he ejaculated. "I've heard of real life mysteries, and, as this may be the only one I may ever run against, I'm going to make the most of it."

Having reached a conclusion, the confidential clerk of Gaffey & Co. donned his overcoat, lowered the gas, and left the store. He made his way to the wharf, and inquired at the steamship office if the Condor had arrived.

"Just in, Mr. Compton," answered the night clerk, who knew him as Gaffey & Co.'s "right-bower," and Mark at once proceeded to the accustomed landing of the particular packet.

Straight to the office of the clerk of the Condor he made his way, after obtaining a foothold on the boat, and was soon looking over the bills of lading.

At that moment the boat's clerk entered the apartment.

"Thirty-two barrels of oranges for Gaffey & Co.," he said, nodding and smiling to Mark; "and a consignment to you, Mr. Compton."

"Yes," answered the clerk, growing pale. "A relative, I presume."

"No, a friend."

"Ah! yes, the best of friends must part," said the Condor's clerk, with a show of sympathy that almost made Compton smile. "Do you wish the—deceased to-night?"

"I have come for the body," was Mark's reply, and having signed the receipt he hurried from the boat.

On the wharf he met favored draymen of Gaffey & Co. One of them he accosted:

"There's a box on board the Condor for me; see Marley, and bring it to the store as soon as possible."

The man complied by moving toward the boat, and Compton returned to the store.

"I'm in for it now," he said, with a curious smile, doffing his overcoat. "The dickens knows what's going to come of this, and if there's another Mark Compton in the city, why, I may be reminded of a law to punish fellows who obtain goods under false pretenses. Well, if the thing shouldn't be mine, there's a train going out of the city before day," and the clerk laughed at his own words.

It was this announcement that had first startled the clerk, and he found it in the report of the Condor's manifest:

"Mark Compton, 1 corpse."

Brief as the sentence was, it was enough to startle any person, and to say that Gaffey & Co.'s confidential clerk was astounded and mystified would not be describing his feelings.

Who would send him a corpse?

More than one hundred times had he asked himself the question since reading of the terrible freight consigned to a man of his cognomen, and as often had he failed to answer it.

Finally he had resolved to await the arrival of the consignment without bothering himself further with the perplexing interrogation; but, like the ghost in Macbeth, it would not down. It tormented the poor clerk, and his torture was reaching an acme of terror when he heard the dray at the door.

The sound was a relief, and presently the long and suggestive box was in the counting-room of Gaffey & Co. After its reception Mark dismissed the drayman, after whom he locked the door, and, returning to the little room, took up a formidable-looking screw-driver.

But he did not attempt to use the instrument until he had spelled and respelled his name on the box. There were the letters that spelled Mark Compton, and they were arranged in proper order. The lid of the box was well held down by screws, and at last the little shining heads received the clerk's attention.

Having doffed his coat, the young man stooped down and worked with a will and in silence. The screws came out without noise; but the sweat dropped from the worker's brow.

Mark Compton's face was white and almost expressionless, and he never removed his eyes from his work.

At last the last screw was drawn, and the lifting of the lid revealed a handsome metallic coffin.

At the sight of this the confidential clerk of Gaffey & Co. started back, saying in a voice very husky now:

"A corpse it is, by heavens!"

He placed the lid in one corner of the room and returned to the coffin in the chlong box.

But over it he hesitated, while his hands itched to unscrew the lid that his eyes might fall upon the face of the dead. The coffin was extremely large; it measured at least six feet in length, and the clerk thought he could lie down and roll over in it with ease—it was so wide!

Until the lifting of the lid of the box, Compton had pictured to himself the cold but beautiful face of a young girl, pillowed in the case; but when the dimensions of the coffin greeted his eye, such thoughts vanished, and he felt inclined to pursue them with a laugh.

But at last he again fell to the work of revealing the dead face of his consignment, and he heard the ticking of his watch while he worked on the silver-headed screws.

The minutes were such that Mark Compton would not live long again for the world; and when he put aside the steel screw-driver, he drew a sigh of relief.

Slowly the heavy lid was lifted and—what did he see?

A white fabric, seemingly very fine, and underneath the faint contour of a face heavenward turned.

"This is a mystery of the dead!" said the confidential clerk, drawing back from the concealed face. "I've a mind to shut the thing up again and get John to cart it back to the Condor. It isn't mine, I know it isn't, and the sight of the face under the sheet may haunt me through life!"

But talk and argue as he might, Mark Compton could not overcome his curiosity; and, unable to restrain himself, he bent over the coffin and his fingers gently touched the shroud.

Slowly he lifted it, and saw a face that seemed to grin at him with all the facial humor of a circus clown's.

Instantly the sheet was dropped, and the clerk started back with a gasp of horror.

There was no mistaking the fact that the mystery of the grinning dead face had frightened Mark Compton.

After a long while he crept toward the coffin again.

The shroud in falling from his hands had left the face partly uncovered, and while stooping to remove it altogether, an exclamation fell from his lips.

"Corpse, the dickens!" he cried. "It's some of Colby's doings. I'd forgotten him!"

The next moment Mark Compton's hands seized the laughing face, and had flung it across the room.

Where it had lain was a letter, lifting which the clerk caught sight of the illuminated ends of several cigar boxes.

The coffin was filled with the best brands of Havana cigars.

"Luke Colby, I'll pay you for this if it takes a century of scheming," ejaculated Compton, calling to mind the jovial member of the Southern branch of the house of Gaffey & Co.—Luke Colby.

Undoubtedly at that very moment, in some rich parlor in New Orleans, he was laughing over his hoax.

"I'll plan my revenge in the smoke of his cigars," said Gaffey & Co.'s confidential clerk. "If they kill me they cannot torture me more than they have already. This is the ghastliest joke on record. Confound you, Luke Colby! May your grandfather unexpectedly visit you some day in his wooden doublet!"

The next morning Gaffey & Co. discovered the joke, and the counting-room rung with boisterous merriment.

The laugh was on Compton, and the poor fellow, puffing furiously on a cigar, swore revenge on the inveterate joker who had frightened him "almost out of his boots."

Whether the tables were ever turned on Colby I do not know; but I have told, as best I could, the story of the Condor's Manifest.

A Game for Life or Death.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

It was night in the camp of Maximilian's army, and sounds of merriment were heard upon all sides, for soldiers are ever wont to indulge in pleasure, regardless of what the morrow will bring forth.

In a tent in the inner circle of the camp sat two officers at a rude table, upon which was marked with lead pencil a chess, or checker

board, while black and white buttons served for the "men."

Around the tent were stationed guards, and both of the officers were unarmed, while not a weapon of any description was visible in their canvas room.

They were prisoners: soldiers in the service of Juarez, captured the day before; but their appearance indicated that they were not Mexicans.

Both men were of tall, commanding forms, and of easy, graceful address; but, where one had dark hair, eyes, and light hair, and mustache, the other had eyes that were large and black, with brown hair and mustache.

Both men were exceedingly handsome, and upon their faces bore the impress of noble souls and hearts that knew no fear.

A love of adventure had caused them to leave their homes in the north, after the close of the civil war, in which both had fought bravely, and cast their swords with Juarez, to aid in driving from Mexican soil a German emperor.

Capoul Monteith, the blonde officer, was a young man of wealth and good family, a New Yorker, and a pet in society.

Garnet Weston, the brunette, was a poor man, a young lawyer in New York, of good, though poor parentage. He was possessed of superior intelligence, and was fast winning a name, when he crossed the path of Mabel Monteith, the sister of Capoul, and a beauty and an heiress.

So deeply did Garnet love Mabel that he was miserable when not in her presence, and he believed she cared for him; but his pride was great, and he would not offer a pauper hand to a belle and an heiress, and so struggled to win fortune and fame in his profession.

One day, an evil day for Garnet, a pretended friend told him that Mabel was his promised wife, but that their engagement had not yet been made public.

Like one in a dream Garnet Weston listened, and then in despair determined to seek some more stirring field, where the image of his lost love would not be ever before him.

A month later found him a cavalry captain in the army of Benito Juarez, where, a few weeks later, he was surprised to be joined by Capoul Monteith, who had also offered his services to the Mexican President.

In an engagement, two days before they were presented to the reader in their tent, they had been captured and carried into the lines of Maximilian.

That night in camp they were playing a game of checkers, *pour passer le temps*, and Capoul, who was an expert player, was surprised to see how readily he was beaten by Garnet.

Suddenly a heavy tread resounded without, the sentinel challenged, there was a response, and the next instant three of Maximilian's officers entered the tent, one of whom was an American, a Republican, fighting for Imperial Mexico, against the Republic; another was a flashy-looking Frenchman; the third was a Mexican colonel.

"Gentlemen, I am sorry to disturb you; but news has come to-night that Benito Juarez has executed a captain of our army, and I have orders to select one of you, and march you forth to die in retaliation," and the American Imperialist looked sad over the duty he had to perform.

"You cannot mean that one of us must die for an offense against Maximilian by Juarez," said the Frenchman, rising.

"Even so are my orders, sir; but I know not which to select, for my duty is most painful."

"Let the gentlemen play a game for the choice—the loser to die," suggested the young Frenchman.

"A good idea, monsieur. Gentlemen, I observe you were playing a game of checkers when we entered, so set to work and play three games, the one who wins two of them to escape, the other to die."

"When is this execution to be?" asked Garnet Weston.

"Within the hour, sir."

"Very well; Capoul, I am ready for the game of life and death."

Capoul Monteith paced to and fro the tent with quick, nervous strides; he was young, handsome, possessed of vast wealth, and fond of life, and he cared not to be thus shot down like a dog; but he was a brave man, and thought of Garnet Weston, whom he had always admired, and half-wished to be the loser rather than see his friend die.

"I am ready," he at length said, and the two friends, strangers in a strange land, sat down to play the game for life or death.

Capoul Monteith played with the utmost caution, for, "If one must die, I have as good a right to struggle for life as has Garnet," he thought.

Garnet Weston played with indifference, a quiet, sad smile upon his face, and around them stood the three officers, and the platoon that were to be the executioners of the losing one.

Ten minutes passed, twenty, and the game was won by Capoul Monteith, whose face flushed crimson and then paled again.

Garnet Weston's face never changed an expression for the same smile rested there.

The second game passed quickly, Garnet making his moves the instant Capoul had raised his hand, and surprising all by his reckless indifference, but cool manner.

Five minutes passed, and the second game was won by Capoul Monteith.

"My God! Garnet, old fellow, I feel for you from my heart," cried the winner, the tears starting to his eyes.

Garnet pressed his friend's hand, the same smile upon his face as he said, quietly:

"I was ever a poor unlucky dog, Capoul; but this friend, when I am dead look in my saddle-roll, hanging there, and the papers you find please deliver to the proper address, and—Capoul, say to—Miss Mabel I left a farewell for her."

"Gentlemen, I am ready."

"Curse on your Imperial humanity! Will you slay a man as though he were a hound?" cried Capoul, angrily turning toward the officers, for it cut him to the heart to thus part with his friend.

"I yield to the fortunes of war, Capoul, and these gentlemen but do their duty."

"Come, let it be over," replied Garnet, and shaking the hand of his friend warmly he was marched away.

Half-distracted with grief, Capoul Monteith paced his tent, his thoughts whirling, and his brain on fire, as he gazed at the stool where a short while before poor Garnet had sat.

An hour passed, and the American officer of the Imperial army stood before him.

"Well," said Capoul, hardly daring to ask the question.

"He is dead."

"God have mercy upon him," groaned the sorrowing friend.

"Yes, Captain Monteith, he is dead, and though I have seen many men die I never saw

one face death with such perfectly calm indifference, as did your friend."

"He gave the order to the platoon to fire, and fell instantly; but, ere he died, he wrote this note to you," and the American Imperialist handed a slip of paper to Capoul, and, turning, left the tent.

In Garnet's bold hand was written:

"CAPOUL—
I gave my life away to save you, for I loved Mabel too dearly ever to let her brother die where I could be sacrificed instead."

"I dare tell you this now, for I stand on the brink of my open grave."

"FAREWELL! GARNET."

A bitter night of sorrow passed Capoul Monteith in that lonely tent, for well he knew his friend had spoken the truth, and when months after the star of Maximilian's crown had set in gloom, and he resigned from the army of the successful Juarez, he vended his way homeward with a heavy heart, for he could not forget that Mexican soil covered the noble man who had fallen, a sacrifice to save his life.

Three years passed away after the game for life or death, and one pleasant evening, toward the sunset-hour, a horseman was riding slowly along a highway, traversing a fertile valley of a South-western State.

Three years had added more dignity to the face, and perhaps saddened it; but otherwise no change had ever come over Capoul Monteith's fine features.

Upon his right hand, setting back from the road, was a pretty little farm-house, surrounded by fertile fields, and the sight promising well for a night's lodging for man and beast.

Capoul turned in at the white gateway, and rode here, to the front door, and dismounted.

The owner of the mansion descended the steps to greet him, and Capoul Monteith stood face to face with Garnet Weston.

"My God! has the grave given up its dead?" cried Capoul, in dismay.

"No, old fellow, you find me flesh and blood, ready and willing to give you a hearty welcome to this my home, left me by an old bachelor uncle, a few months since. But, come in; I will tell you all."

The surprised and delighted Capoul willingly accepted, and around a well-spread tea-table that evening he heard how Garnet had been carried forth to be most bunglingly executed; but a squadron of Juarez cavalry had appeared and frightened off his executioners, and the first platoon had retired, and that a watchful ranchero had seized him and borne him to his ranch, where through months of suffering, he recovered, and was able to depart from the house of his good friend.

But it was long ere he could gain strength enough to reach Galveston, Texas, and there he met an old uncle, who had carried him to his comfortable home with him.

The kind old bachelor was one day thrown from his horse, and night and day Garnet had watched by his bedside, until death relieved him of his sufferings, and the young man found that his uncle had left him all his wealth.

"But, old fellow, why did you not write to let me know, for you know not how I have mourned for you?" asked Capoul.

"I did write to my old law partner in New York, and he said you had moved away, none knew whither."

"True; poor Mabel failed in health, and I carried her to Europe, but we soon returned, and to effect a change in scene and air I purchased a fine farm, about two days' journey from here, and there we now live. Mabel is contented, if not happy."

"She married—"

"She married? Fiddlesticks! No, she never had any idea of marrying any man excepting yourself, and you went off to Mexico and nearly broke her heart."

"God, I thank Thee," cried Garnet, and he buried his face in his hands and wept like a very child.

Three months passed, and the bachelor home of Garnet Weston had a mistress to preside over it—a queenly-looking woman of twenty-two, perhaps, with dreamy sad eyes, and a face of wondrous beauty.

That woman was once the heiress and belle of New York—Mabel Monteith—who had, after long years, married her first and only love, through that game of life and death, in the gulf-washed land of Mexico.

How she Caught the Burglar

BY EBBE E. REXFORD.

"The paper says that they've caught the fellow who has been breaking into so many houses in this part of the town lately," said cousin Jennie, one morning, as we sat at the breakfast-table. "It's a pity he didn't come here, so that you could have added another laurel to your crown, mother, by capturing him. Wouldn't it have been splendid if it had happened so? The family would have been famous. I should have been introduced in society as daughter of Mrs. Van Stratton, the celebrated burglar-catcher, and borne the honor with becoming meekness and satisfaction. Did mother ever tell you about catching that awful thief and probable murderer, Toby Darrell, years ago, before any of us appeared on the stage of action?"

"No, I never heard anything about it," I answered. "Please tell me about it, aunt Annie."

"I've told it so many times," answered aunt Annie, "that I've got rather tired of it, but I suppose you won't let me off."

Aunt Annie smiled across the table at me in a kind of self-satisfied way that assured me that she was quite as willing to tell me the story as I was to hear it. Like all the rest of us, aunt Annie was probably a trifle proud of having done a heroic deed.

"It happened the year after your uncle George and I were married. We had just begun housekeeping here, when the neighborhood began to be troubled over the frequent depredations of some person or persons whom it was impossible to obtain any clue of. House after house was broken into, and money, jewelry and plate were taken. The police were called upon, and detectives were put upon the alert, but to no purpose. The officers decided that the thefts were the work of an old desperado, called Toby Darrell; one of the worst cases in the whole list of villains with whom they had to deal, and one of the most careful and expert. He had been suspected of murder, and dozens of other crimes had been traced to him, but so successful was he in eluding the officers of justice that they had succeeded but twice in arresting him, and on both of these occasions he had managed to escape. So frequent had his thefts become, and so daring, that at last a heavy reward was offered for his arrest."

"One day George had to go out of town, and I was left alone with grandfather Van Stratton, who had come down to spend a few days with us. I don't know where the two ser-

vants that we kept had gone to. I drew down the curtains, as the dusk settled in the streets, and put some fresh coals on the fire, and sat down in our little sitting-room with a new book, while grandfather busied himself over his newspaper. In this way, with occasional remarks, the evening passed off; when the clock struck nine grandfather declared that he was so sleepy that he was going to bed, after which declaration of intentions he took out his big silver snuff-box and took a pinch of that fiery Scotch snuff he used to be so fond of, and, on closing it, instead of putting it back into his pocket, he set it down on the little table at my elbow, and I proceeded to warm his feet before going off to bed. I noticed his putting the box on the table, and supposed he would think of it before going to bed. But, after he had said good-night and left me, I saw that he had left his snuff-box behind him. I took it up and opened it out of idle curiosity, and the faintest scent of its contents set me into a paroxysm of sneezing, and brought tears to my eyes."

"The room was warm and cozy, and my book was very interesting, and I concluded that I would read on for an hour longer before going to bed. I don't know how long I did read, but it couldn't have been long, for the clock striking eleven woke me. I woke as people occasionally do, quietly and completely, without stirring or seeming to wake. The first thing that I became conscious of was that there were steps in the room, and they were stealthy, sinister ones. My face was turned from the fire as I lay back in my chair, and was in partial shadow. I remember thinking, in a quick kind of logical reasoning, that didn't trouble itself about syllogisms, that I could open my eyes a trifle without betraying the fact that I wasn't asleep, and discover who and what my visitor was. I was frightened, but I felt that it was the safest way for me to appear fast asleep. I opened my eyes softly, and saw a man standing about six feet from me, with the flickering fire shining full in his face, and it was the worst and most brutal face I ever looked into in all my life. It was with difficulty that I kept from screaming out. I often dream of seeing that man now, and always as I see him then, standing in the red firelight, whose flitting play lit up his face with the look of a demon, watching me with his cruel, tigerish eyes. He had a sack slung over his shoulder, and I understood at once that he had been through the house and plundered it of everything worth his while to take."

"You know that your uncle George and I began housekeeping in a modest way; we had to, for he was working on a salary in those days, and after paying for the house, we didn't have a great deal left to purchase other things with. You can readily understand, then, how angry it made me to see that great, brutal fellow standing there with his sack full of articles whose value represented months of hard work. I have often wondered at it since, but the feeling of indignation was so intense as to almost overcome my fear and prudence. But I knew from the devil in his eye that he would not hesitate at any crime that he might be provoked to for his own safety, and I think I never stirred a muscle. But, oh! I wished I might cry out for help, and have the wretch given up to the punishment he so richly deserved!"

"Suddenly his eyes caught sight of grandfather Van Stratton's silver snuff-box, standing on the table at my side, and he tiptoed toward it. I had not closed it when I put it down. The lid was open in such a way that light reflected on it brightly, and that was what had caught his attention. My arm lay on the arm of my chair, and my hand was resting on the table so near to the box that when he leaned over, and reached down to get it, his fingers touched mine. I could not help a shiver at the touch, but he did not detect it."

"He lifted the box from the table, and held it up close to his face to examine its contents. I don't know how I came to do it, but I never stopped to think what the possible consequences might be—I flung up my hand, and the fiery snuff flew into his eyes in a yellow cloud, blinding him instantly. He gave a howl of agony and rage, and made a dash toward me, but I slided him. The snuff got into his nose and mouth, and he began sneezing and coughing frightfully, and tears kept running down his cheeks. His exhibition of pain was intense. It seemed to make him crazy. He ran about the room like a mad animal."